

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN BUILDING SOCIAL AWARENESS IN GENERATION Z

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ABSTRACT

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In today's era, various influences permeate various areas of life. These influences cause various social problems, such as individualism, selfishness, lack of effective communication, low empathy, lack of responsibility, low discipline, and lack of cooperation and interaction in community life. Social studies play an important role in developing students' social skills. Acquiring social skills will enable students to live more functionally and meaningfully in the era of globalization. In this context, social studies education aims to form individuals who not only understand social, economic, and cultural phenomena, but are also able to internalize the values of togetherness, justice, and social responsibility. Social studies education also emphasizes the importance of digital and media literacy, so that Generation Z can sort out credible information, avoid hoaxes, and develop an inclusive view of differences. Thus, social studies education not only provides conceptual knowledge, but also instills awareness to act as agents of change who are adaptive to social challenges and are able to collaborate in building a sustainable society. The role of effective social studies education will create a young generation that is empathetic, has high social awareness, and contributes significantly to creating positive change in society.

INTRODUCTION

Education has a fundamental role in shaping the character and mindset of individuals in society. One branch of education that has a major contribution in building social

awareness is Social Sciences (IPS). IPS as an integrative subject aims to develop students' abilities in understanding various social, cultural, economic, and political phenomena around them. In the current context, the role of IPS is becoming increasingly important, especially in dealing with complex social dynamics in the digital era. Generation Z, born amidst the rapid development of technology and information, has unique characteristics that influence the way they view and interact with the social environment. This generation tends to have broad access to information, but often lacks depth in understanding complex social issues. This is where social studies education plays a strategic role in building the social awareness of this generation. Through a relevant and innovative approach, social studies can be an effective means to instilling the values of empathy, social responsibility, and active involvement in community life.

Social studies education also aims to train critical, analytical, and reflective thinking skills needed to understand global issues such as social inequality, cultural diversity, climate change, and human rights. By combining theory and practice, social studies education is able to bridge the gap between conceptual understanding and real application in everyday life.

As a generation that will become future leaders, Generation Z needs to be equipped with the ability to understand diversity, uphold the values of inclusivity, and think globally. Social studies education not only teaches social, economic, and cultural concepts, but also builds awareness of the importance of cooperation, justice, and sustainability.

By introducing local and global issues through a case-based learning approach, Generation Z can learn to identify problems, analyze their causes, and find relevant solutions. In addition, interactive approaches such as group discussions, simulations, and project-based learning can motivate Generation Z to actively participate in the learning process. This approach allows them to see the relevance of social studies education in real life, thus encouraging them to be more involved in social activities such as humanitarian action, environmental campaigns, or participation in community organizations.

In the context of generation Z, a technology-based learning approach, collaboration, and direct experience are the keys to the success of social studies education. Thus, social studies education not only builds social awareness, but also produces a young generation that is able to become agents of positive change in society. Through this study, it is hoped that it can be explored more deeply how the role of social studies education can be optimized in building social awareness in generation Z, so that they are able to face global challenges effectively and responsibly.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a literature study method, which is a series of activities involving data collection through library materials, reading, recording, and processing research materials. This method is applied based on several considerations. First, data sources do not always come from direct observations in the field, but can be obtained through libraries or other written documents, such as journals, books, and related literature. Second, literature studies are a means to understand new phenomena that were previously unclear, so that through this approach, these phenomena can be analyzed and understood. Third, data obtained from library materials still have credibility and can be relied on to answer research questions. Empirical information or data that has been collected by other parties, either in the form of books, scientific reports, or research results, remains relevant and useful in literature studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Studies (IPS) education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals who not only understand the complexities of the world, but are also able to contribute positively to society. In this era of rapid globalization and digitalization, the role of IPS is increasingly vital, especially in shaping the character and abilities of Generation Z – the generation that will inherit and shape the future of the world. This article will thoroughly examine how effective IPS education can equip Generation Z with deep social understanding, critical and creative skills, and high social awareness, so that they are ready to face global challenges and become responsible agents of change.(History 2020).

1. Understanding a Complex World: Deep Social Understanding as a Foundation

Generation Z is growing up in a fast-paced and often confusing world of information. The ability to filter, analyze, and evaluate information from multiple perspectives is a critical skill. Social studies education acts as a filter and guide in this sea of information. Rather than simply memorizing historical, political, or economic facts, effective social studies encourages students to think critically about how these issues relate to and impact everyday life. For example, studying the history of colonialism is not just about dates and figures, but also about its impact on social and economic inequalities that are still felt today. Understanding the dynamics of global politics is not just about international agreements, but also about their implications for domestic policy and the well-being of society.(Dewi Ixfina, Fitriani, and Rohma 2024). Likewise with economic issues, students are invited to analyze the impact of globalization, international trade, and monetary policy on the economic life of society, both

locally and globally. With a comprehensive understanding and critical analysis, Generation Z can understand the roots of complex social, political, and economic problems. They are not only passive consumers of information, but also producers of critical and innovative thinking, able to provide relevant and sustainable solutions. This ability is the foundation for their active participation in community life and becoming effective agents of change.(Dewi Ixfina, Fitriani, and Rohma 2024).

2. Building 21st Century Skills: Critical, Creative, and Collaborative

Effective social studies education focuses not only on transferring knowledge, but also on developing 21st-century skills. Critical, creative, and collaborative thinking skills are key to success in a changing world. Innovative learning methods, such as project-based learning and simulations, are very effective in achieving this. Project-based learning allows students to be directly involved in the learning process (Editorial Team, 2024). They do not only receive information passively, but are also actively involved in designing, planning, and implementing projects that are relevant to the material being studied. For example, students can make a documentary about environmental issues in their community, or design a social campaign to address social injustice. This process teaches them to solve problems collaboratively, innovate, and think critically in finding solutions. Simulations, on the other hand, provide practical experiences that allow students to experience real situations and understand the dynamics that occur in a social, political, or economic context. They can participate in simulations of general elections, peace negotiations, or economic crisis management.(Aslamiah, Abbas, and Mutiani 2021). This experience sparks curiosity, the courage to think outside the box, and the ability to adapt to unexpected situations. These skills are invaluable, not only for academic life, but also for success in the competitive world of work.

Effective social studies education focuses not only on the transfer of knowledge, but also on the development of essential 21st century skills. In this ever-changing era, critical, creative, and collaborative thinking skills are key to students' success.

Innovative learning methods, such as project-based learning and simulations, play a major role in achieving this goal.(Muzakir, I Made Sutajaya, and I Gst Putu Sudiarta 2023).

Project-based learning allows students to be directly involved in the learning process. Instead of passively receiving information, they actively participate in designing, planning, and implementing projects that are relevant to the subject matter. For example, students can create a documentary that highlights environmental issues in their community. This project not only raises their awareness of environmental issues but also teaches them time management, collaboration, and effective communication skills. In addition, students can design a social campaign to address social injustice issues, which encourages them to think critically and innovate in finding solutions.

Simulations, on the other hand, provide practical experience that allows students to experience real-world situations. They can participate in a simulated election, which teaches about the democratic process, or engage in peace talks that hone negotiation skills. An economic crisis management simulation also provides insight into the challenges faced in the business world.

This experience not only stimulates students' curiosity, but also builds the courage to think outside conventional boundaries. The skills they develop through this method are invaluable, not only for academic life, but also for success in the competitive world of work. Thus, effective social studies education prepares students to become individuals who are ready to contribute positively to society and face the challenges of the future. Relevance and Contextualization: Connecting Theory to Reality

One of the keys to the success of social studies education is the relevance of the material to real life. When students see how the theories learned in class are applied in a real-world context, their interest in learning increases significantly. Project-based learning plays a vital role in this. By involving students in projects related to current social, political, or economic issues, they can see firsthand the impact of the knowledge they gain. For example, when students conduct research on the problem of air pollution in their city, they not only learn basic environmental concepts, but also witness firsthand the impact of pollution on public health and the surrounding environment. This involvement creates a sense of ownership and responsibility for the issues they are studying, sparking curiosity and a desire to explore further. In addition, project-based learning encourages collaboration between students, where they can exchange ideas and perspectives, enriching their learning experience. In this way, students are not just passive recipients of information, but active participants in the learning process, making the educational experience more interesting and

meaningful. The relevance of social studies material to real life is key to creating a generation that is more aware and concerned about their social environment.

3. Building Empathy and Social Awareness: Understanding Different Perspectives

Effective social studies education aims not only to impart knowledge, but also to build empathy and social awareness. Simulations and discussions play a vital role in achieving this. Simulations allow students to engage directly in situations that reflect real-world challenges, such as social conflicts, elections, or policy debates. By participating in these scenarios, students not only learn the theory, but also experience the emotional impact of decisions made, which helps them understand other people's perspectives. The discussions that follow the simulations provide a space for students to share their views, ask questions, and discuss their experiences.(Ulfa and Gunansyah 2024). This interaction enriches their understanding of issues facing society, such as injustice, discrimination, and climate change. This process not only improves students' communication and argumentation skills, but also builds a deep sense of empathy for people affected by these issues. Thus, students become more sensitive to the social realities around them, making them more active agents of change and care about society.

4. Increasing Active Participation: Voicing Opinions with Strong Arguments

Social studies education encourages students to engage in discussions and debates, which significantly enhance their communication and argumentation skills. By participating in these activities, students are encouraged to express their opinions on various social, political, and economic issues, as well as listen to and appreciate the perspectives of others. Discussion activities provide opportunities for students to practice critical thinking skills, where they must analyze information, construct logical arguments, and defend their views with strong evidence. Involvement in debates teaches students how to respond to differing views constructively, enhancing their ability to negotiate and find solutions together. Through this process, students not only learn to speak confidently in public but also develop good listening skills, which are essential for effective communication. With honed communication and argumentation skills, students become better prepared to participate in public conversations and take an active role in society, making them individuals who are able to voice their opinions in a persuasive and evidence-based manner. This ability is invaluable, both for academic and professional life.(Maslahah, Lailatul Rofiah, and Durorul Makrifah 2022).

5. Preparing the Next Generation: Facing Global Challenges with Innovative Solutions

A quality social studies education prepares Generation Z to face complex global challenges. With a deep understanding of social, political, and economic issues, they are able to think critically and creatively in finding solutions. They not only learn to analyze problems, but also to empathize with others who are affected by those issues. This shapes their character, making them individuals who are not only caring, but also proactive in taking action. Involvement in social projects, discussions, and community activities allows students to apply their knowledge directly, thereby strengthening leadership and collaboration skills.(Khoirunnida and Yusuf 2022). Thus, a well-educated generation will be able to adapt and innovate, and play an active role in creating positive change in an ever-evolving world. They will be ethical and responsible leaders, ready to face the uncertainties of the future with innovative and sustainable solutions.

6. Inspiration from Activism: The "Fridays for Future" Movement as a Real-Life Example

Youth-led climate activism, such as Greta Thunberg and the "Fridays for Future" movement, is a prime example of how social studies education can inspire real action in society. Through a deeper understanding of climate change issues and their impacts, students not only become more aware of environmental challenges but are also motivated to take action. Effective social studies education equips them with knowledge of the interconnectedness of public policy, individual behavior, and environmental sustainability. Involvement in protests, campaigns, and community events aimed at raising environmental awareness demonstrates how social studies education can foster a sense of social responsibility and encourage active participation in social change. They learn to voice their opinions, network with other activists, and push for better policy change.(Mutaqin, AHZ, Amrulloh, A., Jahari, J., & Erihadiana 2023). This climate activism not only strengthens the sense of social responsibility among teenagers, but also forms a generation that is more concerned and committed to protecting the planet for a better future. This proves that social studies education is not only theory, but also a driver of real change.

7. Practical Skills for the World of Work: Bridging Theory and Practice

Integrating social sciences with practical skills provides a significant advantage in an increasingly competitive workplace. Employers are looking for employees who have not only academic knowledge, but also the ability to apply that knowledge in real-world situations. A social studies education that emphasizes project-based learning, simulations, and field experiences allows students to develop practical skills that are in high demand in a variety

of fields. Students who engage in community projects learn to collaborate, problem-solve, and communicate effectively—all skills that are invaluable in the workplace.(Abad et al. 2024). A deep understanding of social and political issues makes them more sensitive to the dynamics that occur in society, so that they can provide relevant and innovative solutions. Employees who are able to understand the social context in which they work can contribute to a more sustainable and ethical company strategy. Thus, the integration of social knowledge with practical skills not only prepares students to enter the workforce, but also equips them with the ability to adapt and innovate amidst rapid change. They become valuable assets to the company, as well as increasing their chances of success in a long-term career. Effective social studies education not only equips students with theoretical knowledge, but also focuses on developing character and skills that are essential to contribute positively to society. Through interactive and project-based learning, students are invited to understand existing social dynamics, develop empathy and sensitivity to various problems faced by the community, and hone their communication skills. Involvement in discussions, debates, and social projects fosters a sense of social responsibility and prepares them to become active agents of change.(Novita Jumiarti 2023). Ultimately, quality social studies education will create a young generation that thinks critically, is able to analyze complex situations, and seeks innovative solutions to existing problems, becomes ethical and responsible leaders, and contributes significantly to creating a better and more sustainable society.

CONCLUSION

In closing, let us reiterate how crucial the role of social studies education is in shaping an empowered and responsible Generation Z. This article has outlined how an effective social studies educational approach, emphasizing deep social understanding, 21st century skill development, contextual relevance, empathy, active participation, and preparation for global challenges, can produce individuals who are ready to face the complexities of the modern world. Generation Z's ability to navigate the flood of information, distinguish fact from opinion, and analyze issues from multiple perspectives, is key to their future success. A social studies education that emphasizes critical thinking, rather than rote memorization, equips them with the tools needed to do so. They learn not to simply receive information passively, but to question, analyze, and evaluate that information critically, so that they can form opinions based on deep understanding.(Mustika et al. 2025).

More than just theoretical knowledge, an effective social studies education also fosters practical skills that are in high demand in the workplace. Project-based learning, simulations, and field experiences enable students to develop collaboration, problem-solving, communication, and leadership skills. These skills are not only relevant for academic success, but are also highly sought after by employers across a range of sectors. Generation Z who possess these skills will be valuable assets to companies and organizations, able to contribute significantly to innovation and progress. Empathy and social awareness are also important elements instilled through an effective social studies education.

By understanding different perspectives and experiencing the impact of social, political, and economic issues, students can develop a strong sense of social responsibility. They become more concerned about the society around them and are motivated to contribute to positive change. This is reflected in the increasing participation of Generation Z in various social movements and activism, such as the "Fridays for Future" movement, which shows how inspiring social studies education can encourage real action to address global challenges. However, the success of social studies education depends not only on the curriculum and teaching methods, but also on the quality of teachers and a conducive learning environment. Dedicated social studies teachers, who are able to create an interactive and engaging learning atmosphere, play a key role in motivating students and fostering their interest in social issues. An inclusive learning environment, which values differences of opinion and encourages active participation, is also essential to creating meaningful learning experiences. The challenges of the future require Generation Z to be able to think innovatively and find creative solutions to complex problems. Effective social studies education must continue to adapt to changing times, integrate the latest technology, and incorporate contemporary issues into the curriculum.

This will ensure that Generation Z has the knowledge and skills needed to face global challenges, such as climate change, social inequality,

and rapid technological developments. In closing, quality social studies education is an important investment for the future of the nation. By equipping Generation Z with the right knowledge, skills, and values, we can create a young generation that is empowered,

responsible, and able to contribute positively to building a more just, sustainable, and prosperous society.

Social studies education is not just a subject in school, but is the foundation for creating a generation of future leaders who are able to face the complexities of the world and build a better future for all. Therefore, improving the quality and relevance of social studies education must be a top priority for all stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, and the wider community. Only then can we ensure that Generation Z is ready to inherit and shape the future of the world wisely and responsibly. (Novita Jumiarti 2023).

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