



## Teachers' construction of the constructivism approach in social studies learning at Semarang Junior High School

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### Abstract

In Indonesian education, there has been a crisis of learning and a stagnation, combined with social studies teachers' incapacity to contextualize, apply, and meaningfully make relevant social studies instruction available to students. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology is reviving learning in this regard through the Independent Curriculum, which has a foundation in constructivism. This study aims to identify and explain the social construction, planning and implementation of social studies teachers in using a constructivism approach to social studies learning. This study uses qualitative methods. The result is that the social construction of teachers at SMPN 3 and 39 Semarang City is progressing well, but there is still room for improvement. This is evident in the poorly planned and executed social studies curriculum that uses a constructivism approach. Therefore, there are variations in the design and execution of the constructivism method in the classes taught by the two instructors, even though the social studies teachers' building of the approach in both schools is suitable and competent.

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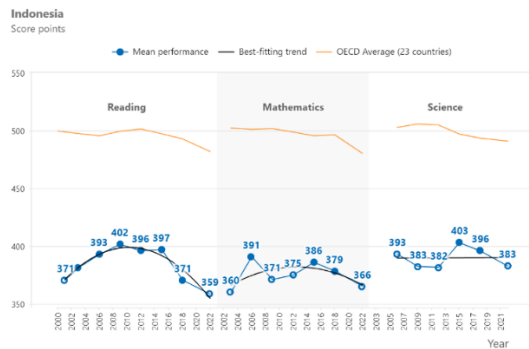
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## INTRODUCTION

One of the primary and crucial areas for every nation to develop is education (Faiz et al., 2022). Due to the fact that education will bring about changes in the social, cultural, and economic spheres of life, most developed nations prioritize this area above all others. The field of education must keep evolving to meet the demands and problems of the modern world.



**Figure 1:** Achievement Trends in Reading, Mathematics, and Science (Source: OECD, PISA 2022)

The fact is that education are still in relatively poor condition in Indonesia, which is a complicated issue. Education in Indonesia has experienced learning loss and a learning crisis, this is the result of online learning (Cerelia et al., 2021). There are several national and international studies which show that Indonesia has also been experiencing a learning crisis for a long time (Afkar & Yarrow, 2021). Based on Figure 1 that Indonesia's score in 2022 in mathematics is 366 (global average 472), in literacy 359 (global average 476), and in science 383 (global average 485) (OECD, 2023). The ability to read and count are two factors that determine the success of an education, since these two abilities are the main factors that can determine the success of students in the future (Putrawangsa & Hasanah, 2022). Based on the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) scores, Indonesia is at its lowest and stagnant position in the last 10-15 years. It proves that the learning outcomes Indonesia are inadequate (Lubis et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, education has general and specific goals. In particular, social studies learning aims to produce students who become good and smart citizenship by respecting differences in culture, thought and belief and being able to solve

social problems in the surrounding environment through their knowledge and experience of studying social studies (Susanto, 2014).

The reality about social studies education is that professors frequently struggle to contextualize the material and give it significance and application for their students. This reality is also evident in the way social studies education is implemented, where it is frequently discovered that instruction is teacher-centered and prioritizes the knowledge component, utilizes information from sources that not apply foster value thinking and instead create a culture of memorizing rather than critical thinking (Anggraeni, 2021).

Based on the statement above, there is a gap between what is expected by education in general and specifically in social studies learning and the existing reality. For this reason, the government is making efforts to overhaul the education system through the curriculum. The government through the Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 262/M/2022 concerning Guidelines for Implementing Curriculum in the Context of Learning Recovery, which was then called the Independent Curriculum (Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, Dan Teknologi RI No. 262/M/2022, 2022). With the help of the Merdeka Curriculum, it is intended that teacher competency will rise and the effectiveness and contextuality of the educational system will improve (Wahyudin et al., 2024).

In the latest curriculum policy, the learning process is rooted in a constructivism approach (Sari, 2023). The constructivism approach consists of 4 learning syntaxes, apperception, exploration, concept formation and concept application (Pramono, 2023). Therefore, the purpose of this writing is to answer how the teacher's social construction of the constructivism approach to social studies learning, how to plan social studies learning using a constructivism approach and how to implement social studies learning using a constructivism approach.

The aim of this study able to achieve using theory Social construction from Peter L Berger. In his theory, social construction must go through 3 stages, externalization, internalization and

objectivation, where this process is referred to as elements of simultaneous dialectics (Berger & Luckmann, 2018). This theory is used since if the social studies teacher's process of externalization, objectivation and internalization of the constructivism approach goes well and positively then the teacher's construction will also be positive. If the teacher's construction of the constructivism approach is positive and good, then the planning and implementation will be the same.

Several research studies related to and discussing teacher construction and the use of a constructivism approach in social studies learning have been previously researched. The study entitled "Social Construction of Social Studies Teachers Regarding Social Studies Learning at MTs, Sumenep City District" (Rasyid et al., 2015). The focus of the study in this research is still on teachers' and school principals' construction of social studies learning in general, apart from that this research was studied when education in Indonesia still used the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). This study has not discussed the construction of social studies teachers specifically in the constructivism approach in the independent curriculum, therefore the researcher examines this gap in a new article. Then a study entitled "The Quality of Learning Tools with constructivism Approaches on the Juvenile Delinquency Theme" (Ratnawati et al., 2019). The focus of this research is to prove learning tools with a constructivism approach that improve student learning outcomes in social studies learning. However, this study uses a quantitative approach and has not studied the planning and implementation of learning using a constructivism approach. So the researcher examines this gap in a new article.

Thus, based on the above phenomena, the study of the Social Construction of constructivism Approach within Social Studies Learning in Semarang City Junior High Schools (SMP) is still worthy of study through research.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen due to the qualitative approach is carried out in a natural place that develops as it is, the researcher does not make treatments and does

not manipulate and the presence of the researcher does not affect the dynamics of the research object (Sugiyono, 2021). The qualitative approach was chosen since it is able to reveal hidden meanings, the real facts are within a person. To identify social construction, planning and implementation of social studies teachers using a constructivism approach, a qualitative approach is very suitable, since the real facts and realities exist within social studies teachers which can be found through qualitative research procedures.

This study was conducted in Semarang City, this city was chosen due to statistical data shows that the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at the junior high school (SMP) level in Semarang City is quite encouraging, reaching 99 percent (Widiarto, 2023). Based on this information, it is hoped that teachers will understand and apply social studies learning with a constructivism approach.

In the independent curriculum, schools are divided into 3 types: independent learning, independent change and independent sharing plus driving schools (Pengelola Web Direktorat SMP, 2022). This type is grouped based on the school's readiness to use the independent curriculum. The schools chosen were SMPN 3 and SMPN 39 Semarang City. SMPN 3 is one of the first type 3 schools with state status registered with the education service, while SMPN 39 was chosen since this school was one of the first generation driving schools selected directly by the central Ministry of Education and Culture.

The data sources used are informants, documents and activities. The main informant in this writing is the social studies teacher in class VIII. This selection was since class VIII was the first year to use the independent curriculum. Then additional informants were class VIII students with the criteria of 3 female students and 3 male students. Each category has high, medium and low levels of ability.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Social Construction of Social Studies Teachers on the constructivism Approach**

At the externalization stage there are several indicators such as socialization, training, knowledge, understanding and experience. The socialization and training from Subject Teacher

Conference (MGMP) Social Studies received by both teachers was the same. The socialization that teachers receive from MGMP Social Studies is regarding the features in the independent curriculum, such as teaching and assessment modules. After socialization, teachers are given training. Socialization and training from MGMP are combined into one, so after the socialization presentation, teachers are immediately asked to practice/exercise in making teaching modules which contain the four syntaxes of the constructivism approach. However, there are differences in the socialization or training provided by each school. At SMPN 3 the socialization at school has the theme of assessment, positive discipline and classroom management. Meanwhile at SMPN 39 a workshop or training was held with the theme of the independent curriculum learning process. This training was attended by a model who played the role of a professional teacher and provided an example of the learning process from start to finish. Then the teachers at SMPN 39 observed the model. However, the two teachers explained that the socialization and training from both the MGMP and the school did not specifically discuss the syntax of the constructivism approach. The term syntax is not clearly stated, but indirectly the socialization and training with the theme of the teaching module contains these four syntaxes.

The socialization and training provided to social studies teachers at SMPN 3 and SMPN 39 is still not detailed regarding the constructivism approach and its syntax. This has an impact on the two teachers still making mistakes in implementing unsystematic constructivism learning steps. Apart from that, socialization and training are not evenly distributed, at SMPN 39 teachers are given training related to the learning process in the independent curriculum. Where in this process there are steps in the constructivism approach even though the four terms are not discussed clearly. Meanwhile at SMPN 3 the socialization and training provided is not the same. However, the knowledge and experience of social studies teachers in both schools is not completely wrong. Mr.Noto, a teacher at SMPN 3, explained that the constructivism approach to learning tries to build students' imagination through basic knowledge of literacy.

This approach is important to use in everyday learning. In other words, in this learning approach, students become an important input that builds their knowledge and learning experiences independently. Likewise, Mrs.Nurul explained that the constructivism learning approach is an approach where students are more active in seeking information themselves to form their knowledge and learning experiences, while the teacher is only a facilitator. Mrs.Nurul also explained that the intensity of using this approach is very large in the social studies learning that he teaches.

The experience of the two teachers regarding the implementation of the constructivism learning approach was also positive, where the student center learning which had been expected to be realized well was that the teachers found an increase in student activity when using these four syntaxes. Mr.Noto explained that when the constructivism approach is applied in class, students become active in seeking information from various sources independently. Likewise, Mrs.Nurul explained that if this approach is implemented in class, students will actively construct information into knowledge and learning experiences.

At the internalization stage there are several indicators such as consideration and decision making by the teacher. Mr.Noto considers student activity and meaning in learning. The point is that by using a constructivism approach students become active since in this approach students independently construct their knowledge and learning experiences. Apart from that, Mr.Noto feels that in social studies learning meaning is very necessary since there are many values that students can take to build positive character. Therefore, with an independent learning process, students can gain more meaning from their knowledge and learning experiences. In contrast to Mrs.Nurul, the consideration in using a constructivism approach lies in the urgency of the material being presented. If the material presented is important in the sense that it can be used or is useful for students' lives since it is practical, then the four steps of constructivism will be applied. This is done so that the learning provided makes an impression, since students construct their own knowledge. The considerations presented by the two teachers were

not wrong since they were based on students' interests.

Based on the considerations above, the two social studies teachers at SMPN 3 and SMPN 39 said that the constructivism approach with its four syntaxes was important. Therefore, the intensity of use of this approach in social studies learning by both teachers is very frequent and has high urgency. This has an impact on the decision-making process of teachers who often plan and implement social studies learning using the syntax constructivist approach. The two social studies teachers made wise decisions based on the circumstances, conditions and needs of the world of education.

The final stage is objectification in which there are several indicators such as school policies and support from the professional community, MGMP Social Studies Semarang City. From the review process that the researcher carried out, the objectification stage in both schools did not go well, since it turned out that in both schools the use of a constructivism approach in the learning process was not a written policy. At SMPN 3, the constructivism approach is only used in the form of an appeal, a briefing in the morning before the teacher enters the classroom, but the briefing time is very short and uncertain. Meanwhile at SMPN 39, the school only makes policies regarding the formation of a teacher learning community, called *Kombes-39*. This teacher learning community is one of the policies created by the school to support the implementation of good practices in the Merdeka curriculum, one of which is a learning process that contains steps in the constructivism approach. However, there is still no written policy regarding the use of a constructivism approach in the learning process.

Many teachers are impacted by this, as they may not give the classroom learning process enough attention. The advice given by the school only extends to the planning made by the teacher, meaning that in the teaching module the teacher writes down the syntax constructivist in learning. However, in practice this is not the case, this will later be discussed and proven further in the application of the constructivism learning approach in the classroom. However, the support from MGMP Social Studies is very good, where at the

beginning of every semester MGMP carries out sharing activities related to features and information in the Merdeka curriculum. Support from a good and positive MGMP can cover the gaps in the school system which does not make policies related to the constructivism approach to learning.

If these three stages, externalization, internalization and objectivation, are positive and each indicator is implemented well and appropriately, then the teacher's construction of the constructivism approach in social studies learning will be good and appropriate too. In this case, the two teachers in the third stage of the process were running positively and well, but not perfectly. This means that there are several indicators that are not working properly, such as socialization and training that don't detail discuss the steps of constructivist approach. Apart from that, schools that don't make written policies are an imperfection in teachers' construction of the constructivism approach.

However, the majority of indicators at these three stages were implemented well by teachers at SMPN 3 and SMPN 39 Semarang City. The existence of several things that are not appropriate will later be seen in the imperfect planning and implementation of the constructivism approach in social studies learning.

### **Social Studies Learning Planning Using Constructivism Approach**

The teaching module created by Mr.Noto still contains several components that are incomplete, such as there is no information and teacher learning references and the learning media used is not listed in the teaching module. Apart from that, it was found that the teaching module that Mr.Noto made was only to relieve administrative duties since what was written in the module was not implemented in class, since Mr.Noto was still guided by the content material in the textbook distributed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2021, even though the CP & ATP had changed . This is different from the teaching module created by Mrs.Nurul which already contains complete learning objectives, learning steps starting from introductory, core and closing activities, media used in learning, learning assessments and there is already information and references used by Mrs.Nurul.

The teaching module designed by Mrs.Nurul looks more ready to be used, since it already contains general information which has been filled in, in contrast to Mr.Noto who has not filled in general information in his teaching module. Then the Mrs.Nurul teaching module contains Pancasila student profiles, learning facilities/infrastructure, learning media, diagnostic assessments, meaningful understanding, and an attachment containing Student Worksheets (LKPD). This is not in the teaching module that Mr.Noto created. However, based on the document review carried out by the researcher, the teaching module of the two social studies teachers already contains the four steps of the constructivism approach to learning.

The socialization and training related to the teaching module provided by the teacher has been good. The socialization ends with training, the practice in creating teaching modules. Even at SMPN 39 there is socialization and training from the school regarding the learning process which is modeled by a professional teacher. Based on this, it is not surprising that the teaching module designed by the teacher is appropriate and contains with the constructivist syntax.

There are several material criteria in the constructivism approach in each learning syntax. At the apperception stage, the material must be material that arouses students' interest and curiosity. Then, at the exploration stage, the material must be material that is able to build students' logical thinking. Next, at the concept formation stage, it must contain essential material. Finally, the concept application stage, is material related to issues around the students.

Based on interviews with the two teachers and selected students in each school, information was found that the material designed by Mr.Noto had not been developed and did not support constructivism learning syntax. The material used by Mr.Noto only relies on material in textbooks provided by the government in 2021. Of course this is not in accordance with the principles of an independent curriculum or a constructivism approach. since the new CP & ATP are not the same as the material in the textbook, apart from that the content of the material is not adapted to the conditions and needs of students. Meanwhile,

Mrs.Nurul in planning and developing materials has approached the principles of the constructivism approach. This is proven that the material used by Mrs.Nurul follows the latest CP & ATP and then developed by looking for material that is applicable and renewable for her students.

Some instructional methods that are compatible with the constructivism approach are discovery learning, inquiry teaching, peer-assisted learning, discussion and debate, and reflective teaching (Schunk, 2018). Based on interviews with students, information was found that the majority of students at SMPN 3 and SMPN 39 liked the discussion learning model with peers.

Based on the review that Mr.Noto has carried out in implementing learning models in the classroom, he still often uses conventional models, which is not in accordance with the principles of the constructivism approach in the Merdeka curriculum. Meanwhile, Mrs.Nurul has used a learning model that is in accordance with the steps of a constructivism approach, like group discussions and presentations, project-based and problem-based learning. This difference is caused since senior teachers usually find it more difficult to accept learning transformations and find it difficult to abandon their old habits in the learning process. Apart from that, the socialization and training received by teachers at SMPN 39 is better, including school policies such as the provision of the Kombes-39 program. Then, SMPN 39 is also a “Sekolah Penggerak”, so the Merdeka curriculum learning process also seems to be going well at this school.

Learning media that is in accordance with the curriculum and constructivism approach is media that increases students' curiosity to construct their knowledge through the use of technology (Fakhri Akhmad, 2023). The learning media used by the two teachers seems to be different. The senior teacher, Mr.Noto, more often uses traditional learning media and rarely makes use of technology. Meanwhile, young teachers have minimized the use of paper by giving digital-based assignments, especially Mrs.Nurul more often uses learning media that utilizes technology. Even though if you look at the support for facilities/infrastructure from schools, it is almost the same, but in using learning media Mr Noto often only uses textbooks distributed by the

government. So it is necessary to increase teacher motivation and awareness to improve the quality of learning in the classroom. Especially senior teachers, the majority of whom sometimes have difficulty facing transformation in the world of education.

Lastly is the evaluation review, where in the independent curriculum assessment is divided into three diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. Assessments in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains in the independent curriculum are combined into one or referred to as authentic assessment. The constructivism approach is designed for meaningful and deep learning, not for superficial understanding. True-false and multiple-choice tests may not be appropriate for assessing learning outcomes (Schunk, 2018). So open-ended questions are more recommended in the constructivism approach to learning.

Based on interviews conducted by researchers, it is known that the two teachers, Mr.Noto and Mrs.Nurul, in providing evaluations, more often use closed or multiple choice questions. In fact, in the constructivism approach, the type of closed questions is very contrary to the principles of this approach. However, the two teachers argued that the type of closed questions used were complex multiple choice and HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills). It is hoped that teachers will still frequently provide open-ended questions when assignments, so that students continue to train their analytical and critical thinking skills.

In general, it can be explained that the plans designed and designed by Mrs.Nurul are closer to the principles of the constructivism approach recommended by the Merdeka curriculum. Meanwhile, Mr.Noto needs adjustments and transformation in the planning process. However, these two teachers still need more detailed outreach and training regarding the constructivism approach in the Merdeka curriculum.

### **Application of social studies learning using constructivism approach**

The apperception stage in Mrs.Nurul's class is more relevant and in accordance with constructivism learning principles. Mrs.Nurul has carried out the learning process at the apperception

stage, such as starting an interesting lesson, asking stimulating questions by linking issues/problems around students related to the material, connecting previous learning, conveying learning objectives and encouraging students to express their knowledge. Even though Mrs.Nurul encountered this in the process, this was not always done at every meeting. Meanwhile, the implementation of apperception in Mr.Noto's class requires many improvements, such as the need to provide trigger questions related to issues/problems around students and the need to convey learning objectives in class.

At the exploration stage of learning activities taught by Mrs.Nurul, she provided written and verbal instructions, used reference sources from students' experiences first and did not limit students in using learning resources. Then the exploration process in Mrs.Nurul's class, collecting, grouping and interpreting data, was running properly, where students were active in independently constructing knowledge. Meanwhile, the exploration stage taught by Mr.Noto still needs improvement since Mr.Noto in giving instructions is still verbal, it would be better if Mr.Noto gave written LKPD and gave students the opportunity to use a wide variety of reference sources, not just book. This is done so that learning in Mr Noto's class runs well at the exploration stage, since this stage is an important stage for students in the constructivism approach.

The third stage, concept formation in Mr.Noto's class, starts from the discussion process and group formation. This process has been running correctly. However, Mr.Noto has not utilized technology to support students' soft skills in presentations, since students are not required to create output in the form of PPTs or infographics. Then Mr.Noto also did not emphasize the concept when the presentation stage was over, even though emphasizing the concept by the teacher was very important at this stage. This is since if the teacher emphasizes concepts, students become confident in the knowledge they gain. Meanwhile, Mrs.Nurul has honed students' soft skills and emphasized concepts well, but group formation still needs improvement. If students often form their own groups, discussion activities will become ineffective since students only choose the same friends. But both teachers were good at managing the discussion

process by not getting angry when the class became busy. Both teachers understand that when discussing, crowds and commotion are sometimes unavoidable.

Finally, at the concept application stage, Mrs.Nurul has tried to identify issues/problems around students related to the material in class, then Mrs.Nurul has also concluded at the end of the lesson. Therefore, at this stage it is going well in Mrs.Nurul's class. Meanwhile, Mr.Noto does not make the material relevant to students' daily issues/problems/activities, apart from that, Mr.Noto also does not draw conclusions in class.

The two teachers' mistakes in implementing social studies learning using a constructivism approach were based on a socialization process that did not discuss the syntax of constructivist in detail. So the application of this approach in the classroom is still not perfect.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the teacher's construction of the constructivism approach in social studies learning is very good and positive. This was proven when the two teachers interviewed often used this approach in social studies learning. Then the social studies learning planning that uses a constructivism approach in class is more appropriate and appropriate in Mrs.Nurul's class, as well as the application of constructivism syntax has gone well in Mrs.Nurul's class. However, in Mr.Noto's class, the planning and implementation of learning using a constructivism approach is still inappropriate and wrong. This difference is due to differences in socialization and training received by teachers. Apart from that, young teachers are easier to accept changes in learning. This is different from senior teachers who still find it difficult to adapt to curriculum transformation. So the planning and implementation of the constructivism approach in Mr Noto's class still needs improvement. This writing criticizes the Social Construction theory of Peter L Berger, since it turns out that not always if the teacher's construction is good and positive towards this approach it will be reflected in good planning and implementation as well. The proof is that Mr.Noto's construction of this approach is very good, but in reality the planning and implementation

in the classroom does not always go well. Likewise, Mrs.Nurul's class is not yet perfect in accordance with the principles of the constructivism approach.

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