

# Public Policy and the Integration of Social Studies Values in Higher Education in Indonesia

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## Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the integration of Social Studies (IPS) values into the Indonesian university curriculum and its influence on the development of students' character and social awareness. The integration of IPS values is considered important because higher education is not only a place to develop students' academic abilities, but also to shape social attitudes, responsibility, tolerance, nationalism, and critical thinking skills in social life. This study uses a literature review research method with a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were obtained from various literature sources, such as scientific journals, research articles, and educational documents related to IPS learning, character education, and the development of the university curriculum. The results of the study indicate that the integration of IPS values can be implemented through various learning activities, such as social case discussions, field observations, community-based projects, social research, and community service activities. This implementation can increase students' social awareness, responsibility, tolerance, nationalism, and critical thinking skills. The results of the discussion show that the integration of IPS values can be implemented effectively through various social-based learning activities in the university curriculum, and this implementation has been proven to contribute positively to improving the character, social awareness, and critical thinking skills of students in Indonesia. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on integrating social studies values in the context of higher education, as previous research has focused more on the application of social studies values at the elementary and secondary school levels. Therefore, this research is expected to serve as a reference in developing a higher education curriculum that is more oriented toward character building and student social awareness.

**Keywords:** Integration of Social Studies Values, Higher Education, Character Education, Social Awareness, Higher Education Curriculum, Social Studies Learning.

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## INTRODUCTION

Social Studies (IPS) is a discipline that examines various aspects of human life within a community. This encompasses social interactions, economic activities, cultural values, political systems, and the various events that arise in daily routines. In the realm of education, IPS is not merely a method of transferring knowledge about social life, but also plays a crucial role in character development, attitude formation, and personality formation of students. By participating in IPS learning, students are encouraged to pay attention to social issues comprehensively, which then enables them to cultivate a sense of responsibility, mutual respect, a spirit of collaboration, concern for others, and the ability to think critically when faced with various societal dynamics. Thus, IPS makes a significant contribution to developing individuals who are not only intellectually superior but also possess a strong social and moral awareness in communal life. This role makes IPS a crucial component in the education system, including at the tertiary level (Ramdani & Zamroni, 2014).

The integration of social studies values in higher education can be understood as the process of incorporating and internalizing social values into various learning activities and student academic endeavors. These values include social awareness, responsibility, tolerance, nationalism, cooperation, and critical thinking skills in addressing various life challenges. However, the implementation of higher education in Indonesia still often focuses on achieving academic competencies and mastering professional skills needed by the workplace. This condition results in aspects of character formation and strengthening social awareness not receiving optimal attention. In fact, higher education institutions bear obligations that are not limited to scientific and technological advancement, but also to preparing a young generation with integrity, morals, and a concern for the social conditions in their environment. Therefore, incorporating social studies (IPS) values into the university curriculum is a crucial requirement to support the comprehensive development of students, both intellectually and socially (Winarni, 2013; Hasanah, 2013). This is also in line with the direction of national education policy which prioritizes character strengthening in the teaching and learning process in higher education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020).

The development of globalization and advances in information technology have brought about rapid changes in people's lives. On the one hand, these developments

provide various conveniences in obtaining information, communicating, and accessing knowledge. However, on the other hand, various social challenges have emerged that require serious attention, such as increasing individualism, low concern for the surrounding environment, the dissemination of irresponsible information, and declining tolerance among the younger generation. This situation indicates that educational achievement is not solely measured by students' academic prowess. Furthermore, success is also reflected in their capacity to understand, respond to, and address various emerging societal issues. Therefore, higher education needs to develop a learning process that is not only oriented towards mastery of theory, but also on strengthening social values that can help students become more caring, wise, and responsible individuals in society (Banks, 2007; Tilaar, 2002).

Research on the integration of Social Studies (IPS) values at the tertiary level can be analyzed through the lens of Vygotsky's social constructivism theory. This theory suggests that learning occurs through social interactions and experiences gained from one's environment. Knowledge is not passively received but rather created through active participation in relevant social activities. In the context of social studies learning, students not only learn concepts and theories from textbooks but also deepen their understanding through interactions with their social environment, group discussions, fieldwork, research, and community service activities. These experiences enable students to understand various social phenomena while enhancing their abilities in critical thinking, collaboration, and responsible decision-making. Thus, social studies teaching plays a fundamental role in fostering students' character and social awareness on an ongoing basis (Vygotsky, 1978).

In addition to being supported by the theoretical foundation of social constructivism, the importance of incorporating Social Studies (IPS) values in higher education aligns with Lickona's character development theory. Lickona states that the goal of education is not only limited to improving students' thinking skills, but also in character formation through strengthening aspects of moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions. These three elements are very important to be developed in a balanced manner, so that students can understand moral concepts theoretically and also apply them in everyday life. In the realm of higher education, the inclusion of IPS values can function as a powerful instrument to instill in students an attitude of social concern, responsibility, tolerance, and national awareness. Through a contextual learning process related to social reality, students are expected to be able to develop strong characters and

have an awareness to contribute positively to social and national life (Lickona, 1991; Zubaedi, 2011).

Previous research has indicated that teaching Social Studies (IPS) has a significant impact on students' character development and social interactions. However, the majority of these studies tend to focus on elementary and secondary education levels. Studies on the integration of IPS values into higher education settings are still relatively rare. This is despite the fact that college students are the generation expected to be catalysts for social change and future leaders, thus requiring deeper character development and social sensitivity. Given this situation, this study is crucial to explore how IPS values are integrated into Indonesian higher education syllabi and their impact on character development, social awareness, and critical thinking skills. It is hoped that the findings of this study can contribute to efforts to develop higher education curricula. This curriculum should not only focus on academic achievement but also on the development of personality and social awareness among students (Ramdani & Zamroni, 2014; Winarni, 2013).

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted using a literature review approach. This approach involves collecting, reviewing, and evaluating various written references related to the research material. The selection of this approach was based on the research focus related to the concepts, theories, and findings of previous research on the integration of Social Studies (IPS) values into learning design at universities in Indonesia. Information for this research was obtained from various academic sources, including books, journal publications from both Indonesia and abroad, research reports, and policy documents in the field of education relevant to IPS teaching, character development, and higher education syllabus design. The literature review allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of various previous research findings, thus serving as a basis for analyzing the importance of integrating IPS values in developing students' character and social awareness. According to Hamzah (2022), library research is an investigative approach that relies on various written references, including books, scientific journal articles, archives, and previous research reports, as fundamental sources of information. The goal is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or issue being studied.

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach because it aims to systematically describe, explain, and interpret various information obtained from literature sources. This approach allows researchers to understand the phenomenon of the integration of social studies values in higher education in greater depth based on previously published research results and theories. Data collection was conducted through searching various online scientific references using digital libraries, Google Scholar, and various academic journal databases relevant to the research topic. The literature found was then selected based on the suitability of the theme, the credibility of the source, and its relevance to the research focus. Next, researchers read, recorded, and categorized various important information related to social studies values, character education, social learning, and curriculum development in higher education. Through this process, the data used in the study is expected to have a good level of relevance and validity, thus being able to support a more comprehensive discussion.

After all the data was collected, the researcher conducted an analysis by identifying, comparing, and interpreting various previous research findings related to the integration of social studies values in higher education. The data obtained were then grouped into several main themes, such as social awareness, responsibility, tolerance, nationalism, and critical thinking skills in social studies learning. This grouping was done to facilitate the analysis process and produce a more focused discussion in accordance with the research objectives. This study did not use a population or sample because the research objects were published documents and literature sources. The instruments used in the study included a laptop, an internet connection, and a word processing application to support the process of searching, managing, and compiling research data. Thus, the results of the study are expected to provide a clear picture of the importance of integrating social studies values in the higher education curriculum and its contribution to the character building and social awareness of students in Indonesia.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Integration of Social Studies Values in the Learning Process in Higher Education**

Incorporating Social Studies (IPS) values into university learning is an important way to produce students who are not only academically intelligent but also possess positive personalities and a sense of community. Among the values that can be taught in IPS are caring for others, responsibility, respect for differences, love of one's country, and critical thinking. These values can be taught through various learning activities related to

everyday life. Lecturers not only teach but also help students understand the social issues around them. Through activities such as group discussions, case studies, field observations, presentations, and community-based projects, students have the opportunity to connect theoretical concepts with the social conditions they face directly. This learning process can help students understand that the knowledge they learn is not only useful for academic purposes but also has many benefits in social life. Therefore, integrating IPS values is crucial for producing graduates who are able to think critically, have empathy, and contribute positively to society (Vygotsky, 1978; Ramdani & Zamroni, 2014).

## 2. The Impact of Social Studies Value Integration on Student Character

The integration of Social Science principles into university course material has a significant impact on students' personality development. The values of social awareness instilled through various learning activities encourage students to be more sensitive to societal conditions and the various issues that arise in their environment. Furthermore, the value of responsibility helps students develop discipline, commitment, and sincerity in completing academic assignments and social activities. A university environment comprised of students from diverse cultural, religious, and social backgrounds also serves as an effective platform for fostering tolerance. Students learn to respect differences of opinion, understand diversity, and build harmonious social relationships with others. Furthermore, the value of nationalism integrated into learning can strengthen patriotism and awareness of the importance of maintaining national unity. The ability to analyze various social events, which encourages the development of critical thinking, also facilitates students in making impartial and accountable choices. Therefore, the application of Social Science (IPS) values Education not only aims to produce students who excel academically, but also to shape individuals with strong character and a sense of concern for their social environment. This personality development is achieved not only through the delivery of lecture material, but also through the instilling of value-based habits and meaningful learning experiences for students. The findings of this study indicate that students have a positive view of the implementation of character education in teaching and learning activities, as it is considered to contribute to shaping more positive attitudes and actions. (Lickona, 1991; Adisusilo, 2012; Saliman et al., 2013).

## 3. Strategy for Implementing Social Studies Values in the Higher Education Curriculum

To realize the values of Social Sciences in higher education, a well-designed and continuous strategy is needed to maximize the achievement of the ideals of character-building for students. One method is to incorporate social values into the Semester Learning Plan (RPS) through various activities that actively engage students. Learning is designed using project methods, problem-solving, and group work to encourage students to be more active in the learning process. Examining social case studies is also useful. Community service activities can be used as a tool to instill a sense of responsibility, cooperation, respect for differences, and concern for others. Furthermore, the Independent Learning Campus (MBKM) program also provides opportunities for students to experience community life directly, enabling them to understand various social issues more concretely. In its implementation, lecturers need to provide space for reflection so that students can connect learning experiences with relevant social values. With a consistently implemented strategy, the integration of social studies values will not only become part of the learning material but also become an academic culture that supports the ongoing development of student character. In addition, the integration of social values based on local wisdom can strengthen the relevance of social studies learning to community life so that students are able to understand and appreciate the culture that develops in their environment (Winarni, 2013; Wati, 2023; Ataupah, 2025).

### **Integration of Social Studies Values in Learning in Higher Education**

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in equipping young people not only with academic capabilities but also with moral integrity and social awareness. Facing the dynamic era of globalization and technological advancement, students are expected to develop analytical thinking skills and increase their sensitivity to their social environment. Consequently, instilling Social Studies (IPS) values in the curriculum is an essential approach to supporting the creation of graduates who are adaptive to various societal transformations. Fundamental aspects such as caring for others, a sense of duty, mutual respect, love of country, and critical analysis skills must be taught in a structured manner through a series of academic and extracurricular activities. With relevant instruction based on everyday experiences, students will understand that the knowledge they acquire is not only useful for achieving individual success but also for positively contributing to their surroundings. Therefore, higher education can comprehensively fulfill its function as an institution that produces high-quality human resources with integrity and a strong sense of social responsibility. This aligns with the view that Social

Studies (IPS) learning plays a crucial role in shaping national character by fostering societal values, ethics, and citizenship in students.(Banks, 2007; Tilaar, 2002).

**Table 1.**Forms of Integration and Objectives of Applying Social Sciences Values in Learning

| No | Social Studies<br>Score | Forms of Application in Learning   | Objective                                         |
|----|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Social concern          | Discussion on social issues        | Increase students' sense of empathy               |
| 2. | Responsibility          | Group assignments or projects      | Cultivate discipline and responsibility           |
| 3. | Nationalism             | Discussing culture and nationality | Strengthening the feeling of love for the country |
| 4. | Tolerance               | Discussion on diversity            | Teaching an attitude of respecting differences    |
| 5. | Critical thinking       | Analyzing social problems          | Train your thinking and analytical skills         |

**Source:**Ministry of Education and Culture (2020)

Based on Table 1, the integration of social studies values into higher education plays a crucial role in supporting character development and strengthening students' social awareness. Through various learning activities, students not only gain an understanding of social concepts but also learn to apply these values in their daily lives. The value of responsibility can be developed through individual and group assignments that require commitment and discipline. The value of social awareness can be instilled through discussions of various issues occurring in society, encouraging students to understand their surrounding environment. Furthermore, discussions on cultural, religious, and social diversity can also help students develop tolerance and mutual respect. Social studies learning, connected to real life, provides students with the opportunity to develop a more meaningful understanding of various social phenomena. Thus, the learning process is oriented not only toward mastery of material but also

toward the development of character and social skills necessary for social life (Vygotsky, 1978; Winarni, 2013).

The application of social studies values in higher education also benefits students by enhancing their ability to adapt to ongoing social change. Students who are accustomed to examining various social issues through discussion, observation, and research tend to develop more critical thinking skills and are open to diverse perspectives. This is crucial because modern society is characterized by rapid and complex change. Therefore, universities need to provide learning experiences that connect theory with social practice, enabling students to understand various issues more comprehensively. Learning that emphasizes strengthening social studies values can also enhance communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, which are essential in both professional and social life. Therefore, the integration of social studies values benefits not only students' academic development but also their character development and preparedness to face life's challenges (Banks, 2007; Ramdani & Zamroni, 2014).

**Table 2.** The Impact of Learning Activities on the Development of Students' Social Studies Values

| No | Learning Activities       | Developed IPS Values           | Impact on Students                              |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Group presentation        | Cooperation and responsibility | Improve communication skills                    |
| 2. | Social case study         | Critical thinking              | Train problem solving skills                    |
| 3. | Environmental observation | Social concern                 | Cultivate a sense of caring for the environment |
| 4. | Class discussion          | Tolerance                      | Learn to respect other people's opinions        |
| 5. | Projects in the community | Nationalism and social concern | Forming students' social character              |

**Source:** *Vygotsky (1978); Lickona (1991)*

Based on Table 2, learning activities involving active student participation have been shown to more effectively support the development of various social studies values.

Group presentations, for example, can help students develop communication skills, cooperation, and responsibility. Social case studies train students to think critically in analyzing a problem and finding appropriate alternative solutions. Meanwhile, environmental observations provide students with the opportunity to understand social conditions directly, thereby fostering a sense of community. Through class discussions, students also learn to respect differences of opinion and develop a tolerant attitude. Furthermore, projects involving the community allow students to apply their knowledge to help solve real-world problems in their environment. These activities demonstrate that social studies learning can be an effective means of developing students' cognitive, affective, and social aspects in a balanced manner, thus optimally achieving educational goals (Vygotsky, 1978; Lickona, 1991).

In addition to providing an understanding of various social concepts, social studies learning, which involves hands-on experience, also helps students build stronger character. Through involvement in various social activities, students can understand the importance of cooperation, responsibility, and caring for others. These experiences allow students to learn from real-world situations that cannot always be achieved through classroom learning. In today's digital era, character education is becoming increasingly important as the younger generation faces increasingly complex social challenges, including the spread of invalid information, low social awareness, and increasing individualism. Therefore, universities need to continue developing learning that is oriented not only towards academic achievement but also towards building good character. With the continuous integration of social studies values, students are expected to become intelligent, responsible individuals who are committed to contributing to society (Lickona, 1991; Zubaedi, 2011).

## **Discussion**

### **1. Analysis of the Integration of Social Studies Values in Higher Education Learning**

The integration of Social Studies (IPS) values into higher education is an important effort to realize an education that is not only oriented towards developing academic abilities, but also towards building students' character and social awareness. Based on research results, IPS values such as social awareness, responsibility, tolerance, nationalism, and critical thinking skills can be internalized through various learning activities involving social interaction and real-life experiences. This process aligns with the theory of social constructivism proposed by (Vygotsky, 1978) which explains that

knowledge is constructed through the interaction of individuals with their social environment. In the context of higher education, learning that utilizes classroom discussions, social case studies, field observations, research, and community-based projects enables students to connect theoretical concepts with the realities of social life they face. Through this experience, students not only gain knowledge but also improve their skills in understanding and resolving various social issues in a careful and responsible manner. The results of this study support the view (Ramdani, 2014) which states that Social Studies (IPS) education plays a crucial role in the formation of social character through learning methods that are relevant to real life and have meaning. Therefore, incorporating IPS values at the tertiary level is important and appropriate to address the various challenges of the current era of globalization, which is characterized by increasingly strong individualistic attitudes, a lack of concern for others, and various shifts in society that are occurring rapidly.

## **2. The Influence of Social Studies Value Integration on the Formation of Students' Character and Social Awareness**

This study concludes that the integration of social studies values into education positively impacts the development of students' character and social understanding. The value of caring for others, taught through various learning activities, enables students to better understand the state of society and fosters empathy for social issues around them. Furthermore, the value of responsibility, taught through group work, community projects, and various other course assignments, fosters orderly behavior and commitment in students in fulfilling their duties. Higher education institutions also serve as a meeting place for students from diverse social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, making the development of tolerance crucial. Through the social studies learning process, students are encouraged to appreciate differences and create harmonious social interactions with their peers. This condition aligns with Lickona's (1991) perspective on character education. He argues that in education, it is crucial to develop moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These three components aim to help students not only understand the concept of moral values but also to feel the value of these values and apply them in their daily lives. Furthermore, by training students to think critically in analyzing social issues, they will be able to review various information more fairly and make wise choices when facing various events in society.

### **3. Strategy for Strengthening the Integration of Social Studies Values in the Higher Education Curriculum**

Implementing social studies values in the university curriculum requires a systematic strategy to optimally achieve the goals of character building and social awareness in students. One strategy is to integrate social studies values into the Semester Learning Plan (RPS) through activities that encourage active student participation. Learning methods such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, social case studies, field observations, and community service activities have proven effective in developing students' social attitudes. Furthermore, the Independent Learning Campus (MBKM) program also provides opportunities for students to engage directly in community life, enabling them to understand various social issues in a concrete way and develop problem-solving skills. According to (Wati DS, 2023) The Independent Curriculum policy in higher education provides ample space for strengthening students' character and social competencies through more flexible and contextual learning.

In practice, lecturers play a strategic role as facilitators, able to guide students in reflecting on their learning experiences and linking them to relevant social values. In addition to lecturer support, higher education institutions also need to build an academic culture that supports character development through various student programs, social research, and community service activities. This strategy aligns with the perspective of (Winarni, 2013) This emphasizes that character education must be fully integrated into all stages of learning. The goal is for the principles taught to truly ingrain themselves and shape students' habits. Therefore, the success of implementing values in Social Sciences is not solely determined by the content of the course material, but also by consistency in its implementation and active support from all components of the higher education institution. This is crucial for creating a learning environment that focuses on developing students' character and social sensitivity.

#### **Literature Review 1**

Setiana (2018) explains that integrated social studies learning in the 2013 Curriculum is designed to develop students' competencies comprehensively through a thematic and integrative approach. In this approach, learning not only focuses on mastery of material but also aims to develop students' attitudes, skills, and thinking abilities in a balanced manner. Social studies is seen as a field of study capable of connecting various social phenomena with real life so that students can understand their surroundings more

comprehensively. In the integrated learning process, students are invited to actively participate in observing, analyzing, and offering solutions to various societal problems that exist in everyday life. These findings indicate that Social Studies (IPS) plays a crucial role in fostering character formation and improving students' social skills. The connection between this study and previous research lies in the shared attention to the significance of incorporating social values into teaching and learning activities. However, Setiana's study focuses more on the context of basic education, while this research examines the implementation of the integration of social studies values in a higher education environment that has different characteristics, needs, and challenges. Thus, this study provides new support by placing students as the main subjects in the process of internalizing social values through various academic and community activities.

## **Literature Review 2**

Research conducted by Izzah, Hidayat, and Farhurahtman (2020) suggests that integrating character education into the Social Studies (IPS) learning process plays a crucial role in developing ethics, a sense of responsibility, and social behavior in students. Social Studies is considered a good path for incorporating various character values, given that the material taught is directly related to social life and interactions between individuals. With learning methods adapted to the surrounding environment, students not only master social concepts theoretically but are also taught how to apply these values in their daily routines. The results of this study imply that teaching focused on character formation integrated into the IPS curriculum can contribute to students developing discipline, tolerance, concern for others, and a sense of responsibility for their surroundings. The similarity with this study lies in the focus on the significance of social values and character in the IPS subject. The difference lies in the subjects used. The study conducted by Izzah and colleagues focused on elementary school students, while this study focuses more on university students as learners. Therefore, this study presents a new contribution by examining how social studies values can be incorporated into the university curriculum to shape students who are not only academically brilliant, but also have social awareness and strong character in facing various challenges in today's society.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the integration of social studies values in the curriculum of universities in Indonesia plays a very important role in shaping students who are not only academically superior, but also

possess social awareness, responsibility, tolerance, nationalism, and critical thinking skills. This integration is not enough to be understood simply as additional material, but must be realized concretely in the learning process, academic activities, and student life. Through a contextual approach, such as social case discussions, field observations, community-based projects, and community service, social studies values can be internalized more effectively. Thus, universities are not only a place to transfer knowledge, but also a space for the formation of character and personality of students so that they are able to face social dynamics wisely. Therefore, the integration of social studies values needs to be continuously strengthened as part of the development of a curriculum oriented towards the formation of intellectual individuals who are ethical, caring, and useful to society.

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