

# Bringing Social Studies to Life through Role-Playing and Real-Life Experiences

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**ABSTRAK.** Partisipasi siswa dalam kegiatan pembelajaran sering dianggap kurang, terutama dalam studi sosial. Situasi ini tentu dapat berdampak pada hasil belajar mereka. Prestasi akademik yang rendah sering kali dipicu oleh metode pengajaran yang mengutamakan ceramah, sehingga menghasilkan pelajaran IPS yang kaya materi tetapi kurang penerapan praktis. Hal ini menyebabkan siswa merasa bosan dan cenderung pasif dalam belajar, sehingga dapat dimengerti jika mereka sering kehilangan fokus saat materi disampaikan. Di era sekarang, anak-anak lebih mudah memahami materi jika disertai dengan praktik. Namun, pembelajaran IPS masih didominasi oleh metode ceramah dengan banyak informasi yang harus disampaikan, sehingga kita perlu mempertimbangkan media pembelajaran alternatif, seperti simulasi dalam kegiatan belajar mengajar. Dengan menggunakan media pembelajaran simulasi, kita dapat menilai seberapa baik siswa menerima materi yang diajarkan. Selain itu, media ini juga dapat meningkatkan minat siswa dalam belajar karena mereka dituntut untuk mengingat berbagai topik yang telah diajarkan. Penggunaan media pembelajaran simulasi juga dapat mendorong kerja sama antar siswa, sehingga komunikasi terjalin tidak hanya antara siswa dan guru, tetapi juga antar siswa itu sendiri, membuat suasana kelas lebih aktif.

**ABSTRACT.** Student participation in learning activities is often considered to be lacking, particularly in social studies. This situation can certainly have an impact on their learning outcomes. Low academic achievement is often triggered by teaching methods that prioritise lectures, resulting in social studies lessons that are rich in material but lack practical application. This causes students to feel bored and tend to be passive in learning, so it is understandable that they often lose focus when the material is presented. In today's era, children find it easier to understand material when it is accompanied by practice. However, Social Studies learning still mostly uses lecture methods with a lot of information to convey, so we should consider alternative learning media, such as simulations in teaching and learning activities. By using simulation learning media, we can assess how well students receive the material being taught. In addition, this media can also increase students' interest in learning because they are required to remember various topics that have been taught. The use of simulation learning media can also encourage cooperation between students, so that communication is established not only between students and teachers, but also between students themselves, making the classroom atmosphere more active.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social studies education is a highly important part in preparing students with the abilities to tackle problems that arise in social life, this is consistent with the goals of social studies education, which include equipping students with the skills necessary to broaden their knowledge and comprehension of social studies in light of advances in technology, society, and knowledge (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017). That social studies instruction in elementary schools is a program created to enhance students' sensitivity to social issues in society, create a positive mindset toward resolving current injustices, and enable them to solve any problem they encounter in their daily lives, whether it be a personal or societal one. Every so often, a problem arises in social studies, namely the social skills that students possess. It is very important to develop social skills (Hu et al., 2022). Due to the numerous social hurdles that students encounter in their everyday

lives, they are able to overcome these obstacles when learning social studies. Social skills are the capacity to conduct in a way that conforms to accepted norms and regulations and to overcome any issues that may develop from interactions with the social environment (Dumont & Ready, 2020). Social skills are the actions one takes when engaging with people in order to get acceptance in their social setting. Many people find social studies to be dull. Why is that? because it typically has nothing to do with real-world applications and instead concentrates on memorization of theories or notions. Students become inactive and believe that the subject doesn't immediately benefit them as a result, which saps their interest (Simpson, 2021). However, social studies can actually be an interesting subject if the teaching methods are more varied. One way to do this is to provide activities that resemble real-life experiences, such as through role-playing or simulation. With this approach, students don't just sit and listen and memorize, but can also get involved, try things out, and experience social situations that they would normally only find in books (Hallsen, 2021). Students who participate in such activities will gain a firsthand understanding of the content. They can also learn about societal ideals that are actually highly applicable to daily life, such as accountability, justice, and cooperation. As a result, social studies no longer feels inflexible and may instead be an enjoyable way to foster social awareness and make learning more relevant (Nestler et al., 2022).

The definition of simulation, derived from the word simulate, is "pretending or acting as if". Simular is an imitation or representation of a work, while simular means to imitate, pretend, or act as if this were happening, according to the English-Indonesian dictionary. Simulation is defined as "a method that presents learning experiences using simulated situations to understand certain concepts, principles, or skills" in the context of instructional strategies. From the standpoint of learning models, simulation, is a representation or visualization of how a system—such as an educational plan—behaves when put into action over a predetermined amount of time. Thus, it is possible to define simulation as a model that incorporates a number of variables that represent the primary features of systems in real life (Ross & Morrison, 2021). It is possible to ascertain how these crucial components can be altered in reality through simulation. Simulations can be utilized as a teaching method because not all learning processes can be carried out directly using real objects. One example of a simulation is a rehearsal, which is a presentation of a certain ceremony to ensure that it goes off without a hitch and on schedule. The simulation approach, then, is a process that mimics or reproduces an event as though it were actual (Kuijk et al., 2021).

## 2. METHOD

This article was compiled using a literature study approach, which involved looking for primary data sources or literature from the past ten years in both national and international journals. Additionally, online resources like Google and journal websites were used to search for material in order to prepare this review. To gather a variety of study data, the researchers turned to a wide range of literature. By performing a literature search and looking for pertinent sources that were unquestionably related to the subject to be covered, the data and information supporting the writing were gathered. Since the data generated is in the form of words or descriptions, online scientific publications and qualitative methodologies are some of the primary references used. Literature is the subject of research that employs qualitative approaches. The research in this study was carried out by using related or comparable studies.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The purpose of this article is to explain how students can learn social studies using simulation. According to a number of scholarly publications, the simulation method is highly important when used in social studies education.

The simulation approach, demonstrates that learning occurs not just conceptually but also gives pupils the chance to directly experience and feel the conditions they are studying. Students can take on the roles of characters or social events through simulation, which helps them comprehend abstract ideas by connecting them to real-world situations. In the meanwhile, students can experience actual circumstances through real experiences (Tackie, 2022). Through actively engaging activities, this model encourages students to participate directly in the learning process. This implies that students become subjects who contribute to the body of knowledge rather than only receiving information (Hudde, 2022). Role-playing or simulations, which help students understand social roles and complex situations; field trips, which tie lessons to the real world; discussions and debates, which help students think critically and communicate; and project-based learning, which requires students to investigate real-world problems and collaborate to solve them (Jacobson et al., 2019).

According to the study's findings, students view the use of simulation-based learning techniques favorably, especially when it comes to role-playing and real-world experiences. Because they not only hear the teacher's explanations but also experience the issues being studied firsthand, the majority of students believe that this approach makes social studies learning more engaging, pleasurable, and simple to comprehend (Tsang, 2020). Through role-playing exercises, such as acting out historical events or taking part in simulated deliberations, students are thought to be able to expand their grasp of social concepts (Tsang, 2020). However, real-life experiences, such as field trips or direct observation, encourage them to relate theory to social situations. Students also said that this technique improved their critical and communicative thinking skills, teamwork skills, and self-confidence. Compared to traditional lecture

methods, they felt more active in class and found it easier to remember the material (Fisher, 2021). This opinion is in line with the idea that interactive and contextual learning can increase student motivation and the quality of their understanding. Students' favorable reactions to the social studies learning model demonstrate how it varies from traditional approaches in that it promotes involvement, collaboration, and critical thinking. Students may become more motivated as a result, and their comprehension of social dynamics, laws, and the environment may also improve (Head, 2020). As a result, it can be said that using role-playing simulations and real-world experiences enhances the learning process and motivates students to participate more actively.

## Discussion

### *Active Interaction Between Teachers and Students*

Teachers and students interact more dynamically, engagingly, and conversationally through role-playing and real-world experiences in simulations than in traditional learning. Teachers now serve as mentors and facilitators in addition to being information providers, creating scenarios and offering comments during the simulation. This setting gives students the chance to actively talk, discuss, ask questions, and even learn specific roles linked to the content they are studying. Instead of being one-way, the interactions that are constructed are two-way and multidirectional. Instructors inspire their pupils to work together, interact, and gain knowledge firsthand (Peng et al., 2021). For instance, in a deliberation simulation, students take on the roles of members of a community with varying viewpoints, while the teacher facilitates the conversation (Yin, 2022). This is the setting for exchanges that call for negotiation, critical thinking, and decision-making. Additionally, learning becomes more engaging and joyful as a result of these active interactions. Pupils are more comfortable voicing their thoughts, feel appreciated for their viewpoints, and are more equipped to connect the subject matter to actual circumstances. This supports Vygotsky's (1978) hypothesis that the zone of proximal development is where important social interaction between educators and learners takes place (Joyce & Cartwright, 2020).

However, using simulation techniques in the classroom has a number of disadvantages. Teachers need to be mindful of a number of drawbacks despite the fact that simulation techniques have many benefits, such as making learning more engaging, meaningful, and energetic. It takes a long time to complete, to start. Instructors are required to construct situations, explain their roles to students, run simulations, and then evaluate the results (Brocie & Miles, 2021). The limited number of class hours allotted is occasionally out of proportion to the time required to finish each of these steps. Second, the degree of student participation has a significant impact on the simulation's success. The simulation will run more slowly and the learning objectives won't be met if pupils are inert, inactive, or don't comprehend their allocated duties (Tang, 2022). Instructors need to be able to inspire their pupils and make sure that everyone participates equally. Third, extra learning materials including technology, visual media, props, and enough room are frequently needed for simulations. Lack of resources can lower the simulation's quality because some schools do not have all of these amenities (Bettez, 2020). Fourth, some pupils don't appreciate drama or role-playing exercises. Some people are not accustomed to speaking, feel bashful, or don't want to perform in front of the class. Even if some students find simulations useful, these circumstances may make them despise the method (Delanty & Harris, 2021). Fifth, there is a good chance that learning objectives will not be followed. If the teacher does not give clear instructions, students could become overly engrossed in the task or think of the simulation as just a game. The instructional message can be lost as a result (Horn & Veermans, 2019). Sixth, it's not always simple to assess the learning outcomes of simulations. Since a variety of characteristics, such as bravery, communication abilities, and teamwork, affect students' success in simulations, teachers may find it challenging to objectively evaluate their emotive, cognitive, and psychomotor aspects (Gildersleeve, 2019). Seventh, an excessive number of pupils may cause issues. When there are a lot of pupils in a class, some of them are unable to actively participate and end up being passive observers. As a participatory technique, this may lessen the usefulness of simulation.

Just 39% of primary school teachers regularly employ active and contextual methods in social studies instruction, according to the findings of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology's National Survey on Social Studies Learning. Lecture techniques are still used by most teachers. In the meantime, 21<sup>st</sup>-century students' traits necessitate a cooperative, problem-based approach and allow for social connection and digital exploration. Through participatory and integrated strategies, social studies learning must be designed to bridge children's social realities with academic concepts (Wright et al., 2019). Teachers are now expected to assist students in engaging in activities that generate meaning rather than only imparting knowledge, when the content is connected to the students' own experiences, their emotional and social engagement rises (Jackson, 2022). This implies that learning will have greater value if students are given the opportunity to personally experience events that are relevant to their life in addition to receiving information. Because they bring reality into the classroom, role-playing simulations and firsthand experiences are useful tactics in this situation. The following are ways for learning through simulation: First, because they enable students to examine social issues in-depth, real-world experiences have been shown to be beneficial in social studies education. Through assignments like writing community observation reports, making posters for hygiene campaigns, or performing basic social surveys, students gain knowledge of social reality. This approach boosts learning process motivation and a sense of ownership. In addition to enhancing students' intellectual grasp of the social studies curriculum, these hands-on activities encourage curiosity, drive to study, and a sense of ownership over the educational process (Zhou & Li, 2022). Because they actively participate in the gathering, analyzing, and presenting of learning

outcomes, students feel more appreciated. This approach also teaches useful skills like group collaboration, critical thinking about societal challenges, and effective idea communication (Chang & Hall, 2022). As a result, social studies instruction can become more engaging, relevant to students' current developmental needs, and meaningful through real-world experiences.

Second, the purpose of role-playing and simulation exercises in social studies education is to give students experiences that help them comprehend how other people behave and feel in social settings. This is further supported by studies that demonstrate how teachers may use simulations, particularly role-playing exercises, to create a more relevant learning environment (Mannheimer et al., 2019). Students actively participate in role-playing exercises by acting out characters or social situations that are connected to the subject matter, rather than merely listening passively. Through this engagement, students improve their comprehension of abstract ideas and acquire social skills including cooperation, communication, and decision-making (Akkerman et al., 2021). The data search's findings demonstrate that role-based simulations can grab students' interest and liven up lessons. As a result, learning social studies in primary school has evolved into a hands-on activity that aids kids in connecting concepts to real-world situations.

Information and communication technologies, project-based learning, debates and discussions, role-playing, and field visits can all help students better comprehend social dynamics, policies, and the environment. This learning paradigm fosters student engagement and enhances critical thinking abilities while offering a real-world context for learning (Gao & Wang, 2021). Through the use of successful social studies teaching techniques, elementary schools can play a significant part in producing children who are knowledgeable, capable, and prepared to contribute to a complex and changing society. Students will be better prepared to become engaged citizens who are concerned about the social and environmental concerns that society faces if they have a solid understanding of social dynamics, policy, and the environment.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It is clear from the foregoing explanation and debate that students frequently participate very little in class, particularly in social studies. The learning outcomes of students will undoubtedly be impacted by this condition. Students who get instruction that emphasizes lectures frequently perform poorly academically. Consequently, despite their rich substance, Social Studies lectures lack real-world application. It is reasonable that students frequently lose focus when the material is presented because this makes them disinterested and passive learners. Children now comprehend the content better when it is applied practically. Alternative teaching strategies, such classroom simulations, must be taken into account, though. This is due to the fact that social studies instruction still mostly consists of lectures that cover a lot of material. By employing role-playing strategies and real-world experiences, social studies can be revitalized as a more engaging, entertaining, and significant topic. While students can connect theory to practice and develop a critical awareness of the social realities around them through real-life experiences like social surveys, field trips, or community-based projects, role-playing exercises allow them to assume a role or social position so they can practice cooperation and communication skills and see problems from a variety of angles students' conceptual knowledge and critical thinking abilities are enhanced by both approaches. Thus, learning social studies is today viewed as a means of preparing a generation that is just, democratic, and capable of taking an active role in society, in addition to being a means of mastering academic information. Teachers are therefore needed to more methodically incorporate role-playing and real-life experience approaches into their teaching in order for social studies to genuinely become a relevant topic that positively affects students' growth.

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