



Ontological study of problems in designing social science learning based on a Merdeka curriculum: A pilot study of social studies teachers in Malang city

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Abstract

The change in the curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum also changed the educational paradigm in Indonesia. Curriculum changes bring changes to the content of social studies learning, especially at the junior high school level, thus creating problems for teachers in designing social studies learning. This research aims to determine teachers' problems in designing learning from the perspective of ontological studies (learning content) due to curriculum changes. For this reason, a qualitative approach was used with a pilot study design to examine this matter. Data collection was carried out through document review and interviews. Meanwhile, data analysis is carried out using an interactive model. The results of this research indicate that changes in the curriculum have caused a lack of synchronization between content standards and expected achievements in social studies learning. This has implications for teachers' problems determining learning material at each grade level. Teachers also need clarification on the suitability of the learning content and what is expected from the curriculum. Not only that, but planning differentiated learning is also one of the problems in designing social studies learning materials. This research's limitation is that it is a pilot study and discusses a narrow scope, namely an ontological study. In future research, it is hoped that more in-depth research can be carried out on teacher problems from an epistemological and axiological perspective. So, the entire teacher's problems in designing social studies learning can be described.

Keywords: *teacher problems; learning design; ontological perspective; social studies learning.*

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INTRODUCTION

Learning design is fundamental to achieving learning objectives. Designing learning is an activity that determines learning activities, ensures that learning is carried out well, and provides anticipatory steps for implementation problems (Aryana, 2020). The learning design also contains learning objectives, content, and assessments that will be carried out in learning (*Permendikbud Ristek No. 16 Tahun 2022 Tentang Standar Proses Pendidikan*, 2022). However, this format continues to change and develop along with changes in the applicable curriculum.

Starting in 2022, the Merdeka curriculum will be the basis for teachers designing learning in Indonesia. The Merdeka curriculum expects the development of soft skills, hard skills, and the character of students (Anggraini et al., 2022; Suryaman, 2020; Vhalery et al., 2022). Not only that, the Merdeka curriculum also focuses on essential material and has a flexible learning system. These three things can be accommodated through a project to strengthen Pancasila's profile. On this basis, several changes were made, starting with learning content (content standards), methods or procedures for delivering learning, and evaluation of learning implementation.

An ontological perspective in learning is critical to educational achievement. This is because ontology in education plays a role in managing and representing knowledge (Stancin et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in the learning context, ontology plays an essential role because it is related to determining the domain and identifying important concepts that must be understood by students (Akkerman et al., 2021; El-Yunusi et al., 2023; Stancin et al., 2020). Therefore, the ontological perspective is related to the scope of learning or learning content.

Social studies learning is one type that experiences changes in its learning content. Although, in general, social studies learning still covers various disciplines ranging from economics, history, geography, and citizenship to integration with sociology, anthropology and psychology, law, politics, and even religious sciences (Adams & Kerr, 2022; Löfström, 2019; Schneider, 1994). However, curriculum changes bring changes to the formulation of learning outcomes. Core Competencies and Basic Competencies, which are very detailed at each class level, turn into Learning Outcomes, which are very general and divided into phases. This will create problems for teachers when designing learning from an ontological perspective. Therefore, this research aims to analyze teachers' problems in designing learning from an ontological perspective.

Previous researchers, academics, and scholars have researched teachers' problems in designing learning. The teacher's problem in implementing the Merdeka curriculum in social studies learning starts from analyzing learning outcomes, compiling learning objectives, and the flow (Purwulan, 2024; Zulaiha et al., 2023). This is considered by Fadilah et al. (2023) as a logical consequence because teachers have yet to adapt, so teacher competence still needs to be improved in implementing the Merdeka curriculum (Basri & As' ari, 2019; Ndari & Mahmudah, 2023). However, very few studies are still at the Junior High School level.

Therefore, the results of this research can fill in the missing puzzle in the development of Merdeka curriculum studies. So, it can provide recommendations for further research and decision-making by stakeholders.

METHOD

This research analyzes teachers' problems in designing social studies learning from an ontological perspective. The ontological perspective analyzes teachers' problems designing learning by determining learning content. Therefore, the qualitative research method uses a pilot study design. This design was chosen because it can evaluate data availability and procedural suitability (Smith et al., 2015). Meanwhile, the qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to reveal quality in the form of data saturation. Qualitative research can reveal unique characteristics even with relatively few informants (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Thus, this combination of approach and type of research is very suitable as a recommendation for further research.

Data was collected using two methods: document comparison and in-depth interviews. Document comparisons were carried out to determine regulatory gaps that might cause problems in designing learning. The documents being compared are Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 7 of 2022 concerning Educational Content Standards (*Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Nomor 7 Tahun 2022 Tentang Standar Isi Pendidikan*, 2022) with the Decree of the Head of the Curriculum and Educational Assessment Standards Agency Number 033/H/KR/2022 concerning Learning Achievements (CP) (*Surat Keputusan Kepala Badan Standar Kurikulum Dan Asesmen Pendidikan Nomor 033/H/KR/2022 Tentang Capaian Pembelajaran (CP)*, 2022) specifically on Social Studies subjects. Therefore, the data analysis technique used is comparative analysis. Meanwhile, in-depth interviews were conducted to determine teachers' practices in implementing existing regulations. Therefore, ten fresh graduate teachers (graduates less than ten years old) were selected. This is because young teachers in several studies have higher adaptability, positively affecting learning effectiveness (Anrichal & Pramono, 2023; Sin, 2022). With the characteristics of informants like these, the results of the interviews can provide an overview of the difficulties social studies teachers in Malang City face in designing learning content.

The collected data is then analyzed using Miles, et al. (2014) interactive data analysis model. This analysis model is carried out continuously at several stages: data collection, data analysis, data reduction, data presentation, and concluding/data verification. For more details about the data analysis flow, see Figure 1 below.

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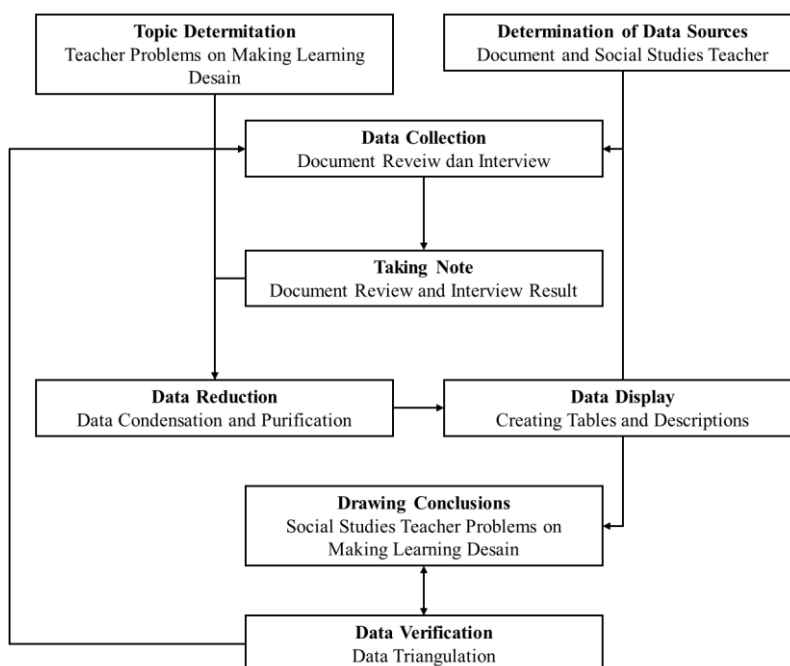


Figure 1. Customized Interactive Data Analysis Flow (Miles et al., 2014)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fundamental Comparative Analysis for Determining Social Sciences Learning Content

Comparative data analysis was carried out on Permedikbud No. 7 of 2022 concerning Educational Content Standards, with a Decree of the Head of the Educational Curriculum and Assessment Standards Agency No. 033/H/KR/2022 concerning learning outcomes. This analysis was carried out to evaluate the differences and similarities between the two formal documents. Meanwhile, this study focuses on social studies learning, so the comparative analysis was only carried out on the standard coverage of social studies learning content and learning outcomes in Phase D.

Standards are the minimum limit for something to be declared worthy. Therefore, educational content standards contain a minimum limit for educational content to be declared appropriate. Conformity, in this case, does not mean that the formulation of learning outcomes must be precisely the same as the content of the scope of material in the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation. However, suitability is assessed by whether the coverage meets expectations within the scope of the material or even exceeds it. Meanwhile, a discrepancy is stated if the scope of material in the learning outcomes description is much below that in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 7 of 2022. Phase D is as follows to clarify the scope of learning for IPS and social studies learning outcomes.

Table 1. Social Studies Content Standards and Learning Outcomes Based on Regulations

Permendikbud No. 7 Tahun 2022	Decree of the Head of the Education Curriculum and Assessment Standards Agency No. 033/H/KR/2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. human behavior as citizens of the country and the world in fulfilling life's needs, which are linked to rights and obligations and the use of technology in the global era; b. the development of Indonesian society from the preliterate, royal, colonial, and early independence periods until now, as well as the values that can be emulated in life today and in the future; c. socialization and interaction between members of a pluralistic society, which influences changes in socio-cultural systems both at local and global levels and how to deal with the impacts in order to maintain national diversity and integration; And d. astronomical geographic conditions around local and global areas influence the diversity of natural resource potential and their utilization for national development to improve prosperity. 	<p>At the end of Phase D, students understand and identify factual knowledge of the influence of weather, climate, and seasons and their impact on daily life, natural and artificial appearances in the surrounding environment, and their influence on human behavior and activities for community life, natural resources that exist in the environment and apply its benefits to everyday life, understand environmental maps, identify the types and developments of technology and their impacts in the local area to be applied in everyday life.</p>

Source: Data analysis

Several things can be found based on a comparative analysis of the two materials in the table above. Not every material scope is included in the description of the learning outcomes in the first material scope. For example, the behavior of citizens and the world in meeting life's needs is not explicitly stated in the learning outcomes contained in the Decree of the Head of BSKAP. Human behavior is written down only in the local area. The standard scope of material should be to reach world citizens. Therefore, if a conformity score is given with the criteria for the word's citizen, world citizen, and use of technology, then social studies learning outcomes have a suitability score of 60% compared with the content standard's first scope. This has implications for learning materials; if they are only developed based on learning outcomes without paying attention to content standards, the coverage will tend to be too local. Even though global knowledge of social studies material is fundamental, global knowledge for social studies students can train skills and instill knowledge and attitudes to participate responsibly in a democratic global society (Crawford et al., 2020; Waheed & Gilani, 2023). More than that, global knowledge in social studies learning also makes people more sensitive to national and global issues, able to adapt to the future, identify goals by predicting change and the speed of change, and reduce the negative impacts of change (Burcu & SÖZER, 2020).

The second scope is explicitly not even visible when formulating learning outcomes. Learning outcomes only cover current developments. So, the suitability value for scope 2 is 20% with the keyword criteria pre-literate period, kingdom, colonial, early independence, and up to now. NCSS, as a reference in world social studies learning, provides the theme of time continuity and change as one of its topics (Nasution, 2011). This theme is essential because it can train students' skills to know their position in the flow of history, understand the direction and speed of change, and predict the future based on an analysis of the past (Burcu & SÖZER, 2020). Likewise, in the Indonesian context, this is useful for predicting the future based on changes in Indonesia's past.

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The third scope needs to be clearly stated in the formulation of learning outcomes. Learning outcomes only discuss people's behavior and activities as influenced by the environment. Meanwhile, within the scope, some keywords are Socialization and Interaction, changes in social systems, cultural systems, local level, global level, diversity, and national integration. If compared, only socialization and interaction at the local level are contained in learning outcomes. The rest is not included in the learning outcomes, so the suitability value is also small, namely 33%.

The fourth material scope is the material scope that is most in line with the learning outcomes formulation in the Decree of the Head of BSKAP. This is because it is related to geographic, astronomical, local, and global conditions that influence natural resources and their influence on national development and welfare. Of the several criteria, namely geographic conditions, astronomical conditions, local scope, global scope, natural resources, national development, and welfare, only the global scope criteria still do not appear in the learning outcomes. Therefore, if it is a percentage, the suitability of this learning outcome with the scope is 85.7%. The scope of this material is the one most widely covered in learning outcomes. This is normal because, in social studies learning, which expects contextuality, the environment is the problem closest to students (Musdalipah et al., 2021; Shimura, 2015; Watanabe et al., 2021). Even in the 2013 curriculum, geography was considered a platform or frame in social studies learning (Marzuqi, 2022). Even though integration between various scientific disciplines can be achieved in the Merdeka curriculum, the foundation of geographic and environmental knowledge remains the basis for social studies learning.

If we count, the average value obtained is approximately 45%. This value is very far from the content standard. Therefore, the formulation of learning outcomes with content standards is inappropriate. However, to expand the scope of material, the expanding community approach (ECA) could be used (Gil & Destura, 2022; Utami, 2021). However, if the objectives are limited, the learning activities and objectives will also be limited. Thus, achieving the hope of attaining content standards will not be easy. Learning outcomes are the basis for determining the direction of learning, developing teaching materials or textbooks, and even becoming a framework for learning (Mulyasa, 2023; Septiana & Winangun, 2023). The findings regarding learning outcomes, which are below standard, are the same as those found by Mufalo et al. (2021), namely that social studies teachers have encountered challenges in the form of a lack of teaching materials and textbooks, which have been below standard.

Teacher Problems in Designing Social Studies Learning Content

As explained above, changing from the 2013 curriculum to a Merdeka curriculum brings problems for teachers. Teachers who are used to learning in a structured and orderly manner based on regulations are expected to be able to innovate and create innovative learning in the Merdeka curriculum. In the Merdeka curriculum, the teacher is the curriculum based only on national education standards.

Previous researchers and academics have researched teacher problems in implementing social studies learning. The teacher's problem in designing a Merdeka curriculum in social studies learning starts from analyzing learning outcomes, compiling learning objectives, and the flow (Purwulan, 2024; Zulaiha et al., 2023). However, in several discussions, the teacher also said that the expectations of learning objectives following the learning phase, future-oriented and differentiated learning objectives, are challenging for teachers to fulfill when designing learning. This is considered by Fadilah et al. (2023) as a logical consequence because teachers have yet to adapt, so teacher competence is considered to be lacking in implementing the Merdeka curriculum (Basri & As' ari, 2019; Ndari & Mahmudah, 2023), likewise, in implementation.

Still, in planning learning activities, the design of project learning activities is one of the main problems of many curriculum implementation problems. Determining the right project for each class is one of the problematic factors in planning learning projects (Zulaiha et al., 2023). The discussion results support this, stating that allocating time for project implementation was the most challenging thing in project planning, especially in terms of strengthening the profile of Pancasila students (P5).

The teacher's problem in implementing differentiated social studies learning emerged in discussions with the teacher. However, planning is easy to implement with the help of diagnostic assessments. When implemented with heterogeneous students, achieving differentiated learning goals tends to be complicated. It takes extra time and energy from the teacher to implement it. Even with this, effective learning can only sometimes be created. So, previous literature regarding the problem of implementing differentiated learning could be correct. The new model of differentiated learning requires quite a long time so that teachers can determine the right program and allocate time efficiently to achieving learning objectives, which are also differentiated.

Implementing evaluation as a standard part of the learning process also cannot fail to be a source of problems in implementing the Merdeka curriculum. Implementing assessments requiring literacy and numeracy causes teachers to need help compiling instruments and determining assessment programs. Not only that but providing differentiated evaluation instruments also tends to make it difficult for teachers. Not only is the content a problem, but the time spent is also a problem. The problem is not only in implementation; it also tends to be complicated regarding analyzing evaluation results. This is because differences in instruments have implications for differences in the units being analyzed, especially if the units of study are very heterogeneous students.

CONCLUSION

This research analyzes teachers' problems in designing learning from an ontological perspective. Curriculum changes are suspected to be the cause of these problems. The document review results show a gap in content between Permedikbud No. 7 of 2022 concerning

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Educational Content Standards and a Decree of the Head of the Educational Curriculum and Assessment Standards Agency No. 033/H/KR/2022 concerning learning outcomes. Even though both of them are the basis for designing learning. Interview results show that this causes teacher confusion in determining learning content. Although this can be overcome with the ECA approach, learning activities will also be limited if the objectives are limited. Not only that, expectations for differentiated learning materials also need to be increased for teachers. Difficulty in determining differentiated material causes teachers to have difficulty determining material suitable for students, especially if the characteristics of students are very heterogeneous.

This research provides a new picture of teachers' problems in designing social studies learning content. However, this research is not free from limitations. Discussions that only focus on learning content (ontological) still need to describe comprehensive conditions regarding teacher problems in designing social studies learning. Therefore, in future research, researchers are expected to be able to discuss a broader scope, from epistemological to axiological. Not only that, this research, which is only a pilot study, also has one limitation. Therefore, research can be carried out with more data in future research.

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