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'Strengthening Cultural Intelligence through Social Studies Learning: A Qualitative Case Study of Multicultural Practices at Junior High School in Mataram'.

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to analyze the enhancement of cultural intelligence in social studies education and to examine the internalization of multicultural values for the strengthening of cultural intelligence. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing a case study methodology. The study involved informants such as teachers, school principals, and students. The research was conducted at State Junior High in Mataram City. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation, with data analysis utilizing source triangulation and data triangulation in order to achieve validated data. The findings of the research indicate that, firstly, the enhancement of cultural intelligence can be observed through the empirical conditions of social studies learning, which encompasses school policies, the learning process (project-based learning models, contextual learning media, non-test evaluations), and teacher competencies (pedagogical and social competencies); secondly, multicultural values (tolerance, mutual respect, and democratic values) as well as school programs (cultural literacy and cultural Saturday). Social studies education that accommodates student diversity ultimately fosters systemic and causal relationships, while simultaneously serving as an affective-normative foundation for cultivating students' cultural intelligence.

Keywords: ***Cultural intelligence, Learning, Social Studies***

Penguatan Kecerdasan Budaya dalam Pembelajaran IPS (Studi pada SMP Negeri Kota Mataram)

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis bagaimana penguatan kecerdasan budaya dalam pembelajaran IPS dan mengkaji internalisasi nilai multikultural untuk penguatan kecerdasan budaya. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan jenis studi kasus. Penelitian melibatkan informan guru, kepala sekolah, dan siswa. Lokasi penelitian di SMP Negeri 6 Kota Mataram. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, dengan analisis data menggunakan teknik triangulasi sumber dan triangulasi data guna mendapatkan data tervalidasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, p*ertama*, penguatan kecerdasan budaya dapat dilihat melalui kondisi empiris pembelajaran IPS yang meliputi kebijakan sekolah, proses pembelajaran (model pembelajaran PJBL, media pembelajaran kontekstual, evaluasi non-tes), dan kompetensi guru (kompetensi pedagogis dan kompetensi sosial); *kedua*, nilai multikultural (toleransi, saling menghargai, dan nilai demokratis), program sekolah (literasi budaya dan sabtu budaya). Pembelajaran IPS yang mengakomodasi keberagaman siswa akhirnya dapat membentuk hubungan yang sistemik dan kausal, sekaligus menjadi fondasi afektif-normatif untuk menumbuhkan kecerdasan budaya siswa.

Kata Kunci: **Kecerdasan budaya, Pembelajaran, IPS**

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INTRODUCTION

The massive and accelerating globalization of the 21st century has brought the logical consequence of intensified intercultural interactions that transcend geographical, ethnic, and ideological boundaries. In this context, an individual's ability to understand, adapt, and function effectively in a culturally diverse environment is no longer an optional skill, but a necessity. Within the framework of Indonesia's national education system, strengthening cultural intelligence holds significant strategic relevance, given that Indonesia is an archipelagic nation comprising over 1,300 ethnic groups, 700 regional languages, and a diverse array of belief systems and traditions that coexist dynamically (BPS, 2020). This reality of diversity demands that the education system proactively build the foundations of cultural intelligence from an early age as an instrument of social cohesion and national integration (Banks & Banks, 2010). The learning of Social Sciences (IPS) in the era of globalization faces complex challenges that extend beyond the mere transfer of factual knowledge concerning society and culture. The traditional orientation of IPS, which tends to emphasize cognitive aspects of memorization related to social structures, history, and geography, is deemed insufficient in equipping learners to thrive in multicultural and cross-cultural societies. In this context, cultural intelligence (CQ) emerges as an important construct that enables individuals to adapt, comprehend, and act effectively in culturally diverse situations. Strengthening cultural intelligence within the framework of IPS education has become an urgent necessity, particularly amidst the rising occurrences of identity conflicts, intercultural miscommunication, and social disintegration occurring in various parts of the world.

Social Studies (IPS), as a subject, is epistemologically grounded in social science disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, geography, and economics. It occupies a strategic position as a medium for the development of students' cultural intelligence. Knowledge with an interdisciplinary approach consists of sociology, history, geography, economics, politics, law, and culture, and is commonly referred to as social science. This field of study focuses on the realities and sequences of social phenomena (Sapriya, 2014). It emphasizes a learning process that actively engages students, enabling them to gain empirical learning experiences based on societal realities, culture, social interactions, and social classes. Consequently, the IPS curriculum is integrated into the school curriculum. Social Studies instruction emphasizes students' competencies to understand, think critically, and make decisions (Parker, 2009). The process of teaching social studies itself needs to be carried out with a structured, integrated, and comprehensive approach. With this approach, it is hoped that students will acquire a broader and deeper understanding of the relevant fields of study. Social Studies is developed and provided to students with the aim of enhancing their competencies and life skills as responsible citizens.

The field of Social Science Education (IPS) is not merely a subject; rather, it constitutes a network of interconnected structures formed by content, models, strategies, and additional knowledge. This is essential for student learning activities within the classroom, enabling students to establish a framework of meaning in the learning process and to develop their critical thinking skills (Bousalis, 2022), as well as to cultivate students' social skills, particularly in relation to their environment (Fatih Özdemir, 2022); furthermore, it facilitates the monitoring of emotional intelligence, character, and cognitive conditions that can transform knowledge into skills (Şeker, 2021). Historically, Social Science Education has been focused on several aspects, particularly in bridging students' cultural intelligence, allowing them to coexist with the diversity present within a broader and more complex society. In this context, cultural intelligence (CQ)

emerges as a crucial competency that young students must possess to navigate the essential complexities of cross-cultural interactions in digital spaces and to preserve their own cultures.

This strategy can prepare students to face global challenges. The reality of diversity necessitates that the educational system proactively builds a foundation of cultural intelligence early on, serving as an instrument for social cohesion and national integration. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach in social studies education is required to ensure the integration of all disciplines present in the content remains cohesive (Aygün et al., 2022). Social science learning strategies have a positive impact on enhancing students' academic achievement within schools (Didin & Kasapoglu, 2021). Comprehensive integrated learning can assist students in exploring and understanding the concepts of Social Sciences and connecting them to the diverse realities of life beyond the classroom (Brugar & Whitlock, 2020). This is why cultural intelligence is imperative to be integrated into social studies education. Cultural intelligence (CQ) can be a crucial competency that students (the younger generation) need to possess to navigate the inherent complexities of cross-cultural interactions in the digital space and preserve their own culture. The context of cultural intelligence helps students feel confident when in environments with diverse backgrounds and builds strong adaptability skills (Basman & Bayram, 2024). Li & Middlemiss, (2022) explain that CQ is specifically conceptualized to enable students to possess intelligence focused on the ability to understand and make appropriate decisions in societies characterized by cultural diversity. Cultural intelligence (CQ) serves as a complementary component to general intellectual intelligence (IQ), emotional intelligence (Alifuddin & Widodo, 2022), and practical intelligence (Sternberg et al., 2022), acting as a bridge in interpreting the dynamics of a multicultural society.

Cultural intelligence plays a positive role in helping students become familiar with other cultures and improve their ability to interact effectively (Li & Middlemiss, 2022). On the other hand, the findings of Biay & Tenorio (2024) indicate that high levels of cultural intelligence and educational motivation contribute to a conducive learning environment. Thus, cultural intelligence cannot be separated from intellectual intelligence, as cultural intelligence is related to ideas, concepts, and thoughts that encompass the domains of cognition, behavior, and products (Septemiarti & Dasyah, 2016). Therefore, cultural intelligence is an intelligence for understanding other cultures, used as a benchmark for cognitive intelligence, and is reflected in concrete attitudes toward the dynamic social realities of society. Cultural intelligence is a set of indicators that encompass knowledge and behavior, forming a cohesive whole. Ang et al. (2019) developed a framework for cultural intelligence consisting of four indicators to conceptualize an individual's level of cultural intelligence, namely: 1) Metacognitive, 2) Cognitive, 3) Motivational, and 4) Behavioral. Meanwhile, Nugraha (2018) argues that the concept of cultural intelligence is the holistic capacity within an individual to adapt to culturally diverse environments in a normative, effective, and efficient manner, there by aiding in the achievement of life goals (Nugraha, 2018).

Empirical evidence from the field indicates a significant gap between the ideal learning objectives of social studies and actual outcomes at the implementation level. Various research findings indicate that social studies learning in many educational institutions is still dominated by a knowledge-transmission approach that is textual and rote-based, thus failing to optimally develop students' affective and social competencies (Fitriyani et al., 2021; Maryani & Syamsudin, 2009; Fitrianah & Saputri, 2021). This situation is exacerbated by the suboptimal integration of cultural intelligence into social studies instruction. This indicates that

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conventional social studies teaching approaches have not yet been able to address the increasingly complex challenges of diversity in the era of globalization. Some studies have focused solely on the context of multinational business organizations (Randazzodavis & Nelson, 2023), cross-cultural management, leadership, and higher education with international students as the primary subjects (Cobanoglu, 2021; Merklen et al., 2022). More specifically, the research examines the enhancement of cultural intelligence through social studies education. On the other hand, research conducted in the context of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB)—one of Indonesia's provinces with the richest cultural diversity, home to the Sasak, Samawa, and Mbojo ethnic groups as well as the Balinese Hindu community—is virtually absent from previous studies. This research gap serves as a strong scientific justification for the urgency of conducting research focused on the context of cultural intelligence.

In response to the identified research gaps, this article aims to fill a void in the academic literature on social studies education, particularly regarding the enhancement of cultural intelligence within a local context. **The novelty** of this study lies in three fundamental aspects. First, this study examines how the enhancement of cultural intelligence explicitly integrates the social capital of the Lombok community as the substance of social studies learning content, thereby producing an approach that is contextual, authentic, and culturally relevant. Second, this study offers a new pedagogical framework that combines the perspective of cultural intelligence with multicultural theory (Banks & Banks, 2019; Sleeter, 2018) into a cohesive and integrated social studies learning design.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study approach. This approach was chosen to understand best practices in integrating multicultural education at State Junior High School 6 in Mataram. The school was selected for its greater complexity of diversity compared to several other schools. Furthermore, the school serves as a pilot project for the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and has internalized multicultural values. The research location is at a public junior high school in the city of Mataram. Informants in this study consist of 2 social studies teachers, the principal, and 6 students. Research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, based on specific characteristics such as knowledge of cultural intelligence, a strong multicultural perspective, and expertise in the learning process. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Creswell, 2016). Data analysis followed the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and concluding (Denzin et al., 2024). Data analysis and validity were ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation.

The analysis process began with transcribing all interview recordings, organizing observation notes, and collecting supporting documents. Next, the researcher conducted repeated readings of all the data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research context. The next stage was open coding, which involved identifying units of meaning from each transcript and assigning codes based on information relevant to the research focus. Codes with similar meanings were then grouped through axial coding into categories representing key concepts. Subsequently, through selective coding, these categories were synthesized into major themes that explain the implementation of multicultural-based social studies learning and social capital in enhancing students' cultural intelligence. To ensure the credibility of the analysis results, the interpretation process was conducted iteratively by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation (methodological triangulation) as well as by comparing

information obtained from the school principal, teachers, and students (source triangulation). The findings were then repeatedly verified until consistency was achieved across data sources, ensuring that the resulting themes truly represented the phenomena under study. The aspects of research data triangulation are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Triangulation of Methods and Sources

Theme	*Principal*	*Teacher*	*Student*	*Observation*	*Documentation*
Social Studies Lesson Planning	√	√	-	√	√
Implementation of Multicultural Values	√	√	√	√	-
Strengthening Cultural Intelligence	-	√	√	√	√
Learning Assessment	√	√	-	√	√
The Learning Process	-	√	√	√	√

This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of research ethics, including respect for participants, data confidentiality, and voluntary participation, based on Research Approval Letter No. 3365/UN40.A2.1/PT.01.04/2024 issued by the Indonesian University of Education. Before data collection began, all participants received an explanation of the study's objectives, benefits, and procedures, as well as their right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. Given that the study involved students under the age of 18, the research was also conducted after obtaining permission from the school and consent from the students' parents or guardians. To protect the confidentiality of participants' identities, all data were anonymized using informant codes KSW.1, SW.1-SW.6, and GR.1-GR.2, ensuring that no information could be used to identify the participants personally.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Empirical Conditions of Social Studies Education in Strengthening Cultural Intelligence

The contextual conditions of the social studies learning process in junior high schools in Mataram City are shaped by a highly diverse student body. The city's multicultural nature presents new challenges for teachers and school administrators. The school responds to this reality by viewing it as a unique aspect of the social dynamics of Lombok society, particularly in Mataram City. The school recognizes that the diversity inherent in the student body is not an easy matter, but it has implemented policies to minimize the impact of this diversity as a form of positive and systematic anticipation. The policies implemented at the school begin with the annual admission of new students. The school conducts a screening process based on individual

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quality, as demonstrated by final exam scores and entrance exam results. Furthermore, the school also takes into account the students' diverse backgrounds.

The most important part is that once students are accepted, the school forms classes by taking into account the multicultural backgrounds of the students. The school even maps out the student body, ensuring that each class is composed of students with diverse genders, cultures, ethnicities, interests, religions, economic backgrounds, social classes, and cognitive abilities. This is a conscious effort by the school to create an inclusive environment. The school ensures that all school activities are designed as effectively as possible to serve as a platform for the diversity present within the school community. The school accommodates every activity by considering the needs of all students, such as providing special rooms to support worship for students and teachers of religions other than Islam. The school is committed to building a comfortable learning environment free from discrimination. The explanation above is supported by the principal's statement during the interview as follows.

KSW.1*: We have adapted school programs and activities to meet the needs of all students. For example, we have set up a space for other religions; this room is typically used on Fridays during Imtaq sessions or during religious education classes. The school provides equal access and ensures that everyone feels comfortable. The school also strives to create an inclusive learning environment. We ensure that students, teachers, and all members of the school community can learn in a comfortable and peaceful setting.*

The findings from the interview with the principal were also corroborated by the students through the following statements.

SW.1 : Learning in the classroom is comfortable; we can work together during the learning process. The school facilities are quite complete, and the teachers are kind and keep us motivated while we study.

SW.2 : I have no problem making friends with people of different religions or ethnicities. Everyone in the class gets along and works well together. I enjoy studying with my friends because we always hang out together, both in and out of class.

SW.3 : I'm in 7th grade. In my class, my classmates come from various backgrounds. We're still good friends. There are no issues when interacting during the learning process. For religious services, we have a special room for worship. So, during Hindu Religion class, we all go to the room provided by the school and are taught by the Hindu Religion teacher.

The results of the interviews with the students above indicate that diverse backgrounds do not hinder classroom learning, and that the interactions that have developed are quite ideal. In fact, students of other faiths are provided with access to worship, as the school has set up a dedicated prayer room for this purpose. The minimal conflict in the school environment is a success resulting from appropriate school policies, good school management, and the role of teachers, which serves as a crucial foundation in fostering students' cultural intelligence. These findings contrast with the research by Lin et al. (2025), which explains that most conflicts occur in the school environment due to interpersonal communication within the same setting. This differs from the situation of students at SMPN Kota Mataram, where there is no indication that conflicts arise from poor communication; rather, the empirical findings paint a different picture: students experience minimal conflict not because of their diverse backgrounds.

Thus, communication in students' social interactions at SMPN Kota Mataram is proceeding smoothly. Furthermore, this situation is supported by school management, effective school policies, and the role of teachers in the learning process, which has proven capable of fostering students' cultural intelligence. Consequently, students are sufficiently aware that

differences within the school environment are not a reason for conflict. However, according to research by Frolova et al. (2019), conflict arises due to a contradiction between students' evolving needs in learning and teachers' ability to present instructional material. This, however, differs from field findings, which indicate that students and teachers are not in a state of conflict merely because of differing needs in teaching students.

The research findings show that students found the learning process led by the teacher to be enjoyable, as they felt they were treated fairly and the teacher did not discriminate against them. In other words, the teacher taught with dedication and provided equal access to all students regardless of their background. All students were treated equally during the learning process. The following are excerpts from interviews with students.

SW.4 : *During class, the teacher helps us understand the material. Every classroom activity is always supervised by the teacher. The teacher always teaches with enthusiasm. The material taught is always illustrated with examples from everyday life in our community.*

SW.5 : *Teachers never play favorites. When teaching, they always divide us into groups fairly. Our groupings are always different. Every group includes at least one girl and one boy. Our group members also come from various religious backgrounds. In fact, we all have different abilities. Not all of our classmates are smart, but we're a mixed bunch. Still, we're able to work well together; even though we often disagree, we always respect one another.*

SW.6 : *While Ms. Teacher was teaching, I always felt motivated during every social studies class. She also gave me the opportunity to ask questions freely, and that applied to all my classmates as well.*

Based on interviews conducted with three student informants (SW.4, SW.5, and SW.6), it was found that the Social Studies (IPS) learning process takes place effectively with the full support of the teacher as the primary facilitator in teaching and learning activities. The teacher is always present and guides every learning activity in the classroom, delivering the material with enthusiasm and high energy. A contextual approach is consistently applied through the presentation of concrete examples drawn from the students' daily lives in their immediate surroundings, ensuring that the material presented is not abstract but rather relevant and easily understood by students within the context of their real-life experiences.

A particularly notable finding from these interviews is the application of the principles of fairness and inclusivity in managing the learning process. Teachers consistently form heterogeneous learning groups by taking into account elements of diversity, including gender equality, religious background diversity, and variations in academic ability among group members. This constantly changing and equitably designed group composition reflects teachers' awareness in implementing the values of diversity and equality within the learning context. Pedagogically, such practices are highly effective strategies for fostering attitudes of tolerance, empathy, and respect for differences from the very early stages of formal education.

The most striking finding from these interviews is the application of the principles of fairness and inclusivity in managing the learning process. Teachers consistently form heterogeneous learning groups by taking into account elements of diversity, including gender equality, religious background diversity, and variations in academic ability among group members. This constantly changing and equitably designed group composition reflects teachers' awareness in implementing the values of diversity and equality within the learning context. Pedagogically, such practices are highly effective strategies for fostering attitudes of tolerance, empathy, and respect for differences from the very early stages of formal education.

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The interview results revealed that the social interactions within the study groups fostered collaborative skills and a spirit of mutual respect among the students. Although differences of opinion often arose as a natural part of group discussions, the students were still able to manage these differences constructively and maintain harmonious teamwork. This indicates that social studies instruction designed with group diversity in mind not only impacts the achievement of academic competencies but also significantly contributes to the holistic development of students' social intelligence and cultural intelligence.

Results of this study align with those reported by Sapriya (2022), who states that social studies is the core of a well-designed school curriculum because it is through this subject that students learn to observe and interpret the world and society, including places, cultures, systems, and other social issues. Meanwhile, Parker (2009) argues that social studies education emphasizes students' competencies in understanding, critical thinking, and decision-making. Both views share a common thread regarding social studies as a means of integrating the curriculum with cultural diversity, thereby helping students make decisions in multicultural contexts. The decisions students make reflect the success of teachers and schools in fostering students' cultural intelligence.

An important aspect revealed by the interview results is the creation of a democratic, open learning environment that encourages active participation from all students. Teachers give all students the freedom to ask questions without restrictions, discrimination, or fear, so that every student feels valued and has an equal voice in the learning process. This environment has proven effective in fostering intrinsic motivation to learn among students, as explicitly stated by informant SW.6. Overall, these interview findings confirm that teachers have optimally fulfilled their multidimensional roles—not merely as instructors, but as motivators, inclusive facilitators, and agents of cultural intelligence in the daily learning environment. The interview findings above align with those described by Basman & Bayram (2024): cultural intelligence helps students feel confident in environments with diverse backgrounds and builds strong adaptive skills. Li & Middlemiss (2022) explain that CQ is specifically conceptualized so that students can possess intelligence focused on the ability to understand and make appropriate decisions in societies characterized by cultural diversity.

Experts' opinions above demonstrate that students' ability to interact in diverse environments—even within the classroom—allows every student to feel safe, even when the class is composed of peers with complex differences that could potentially lead to conflict. However, the opposite is true: students are able to work together with their peers in groups. It is not uncommon for students to disagree, but they can respect these differing opinions by acting democratically. Students also reported that their relationships with their peers are good, and their relationships with teachers are harmonious, as teachers prioritize equality and act democratically toward all students during the learning process. Consequently, students feel that their learning environment is comfortable and conducive to learning. However, these results differ from the study by Frolova et al. (2019), which revealed that the factors triggering conflict between teachers and students are the contradictions between the increasingly evolving needs of modern students regarding the implementation of learning and the teachers' ability to present the material.

The difference in the results of this study is to be expected for several reasons; one of them is that previous studies did not focus on cultural intelligence, whereas in the current study, cultural intelligence serves as an appropriate alternative given the multicultural context. Research findings at SMPN Kota Mataram indicate that conflicts rarely occur because teachers

fulfill their role in motivating students and setting an example for them regarding how they should behave during the learning process. The example set by teachers involves acting democratically by providing all students with equal opportunities to express their opinions without favoritism. Furthermore, teachers also foster mutual respect among students through study groups. The learning activities conducted by teachers in the classroom during social studies lessons help students develop cultural intelligence through direct learning experiences, by leveraging the potential for diversity found in both the microenvironment (the classroom) and the macroenvironment (the school).

Successful teachers in fostering cultural intelligence are supported by a deep understanding of the multicultural backgrounds inherent in each student. Additionally, teachers possess pedagogical, social, professional, and personal competencies. All of these competencies serve as the foundation and tools for teachers to design and implement inclusive learning activities in the classroom. The teacher designs learning in a highly systematic manner, such as developing instructional modules, determining learning models that align with students' characteristics and needs, and preparing learning materials that can stimulate students' critical thinking. Below is an excerpt from an interview with a social studies teacher.

GR.1 : *When I prepare to teach, I make sure all teaching materials are ready, all teaching resources are organized systematically, and even the choice of instructional models is based on the multicultural background of my students. The materials I prepare are always grounded in the students' contextual realities. I strive to make social studies lessons in my classroom engaging and ensure that students experience a meaningful learning process. I create the best possible classroom environment to accommodate the needs of all students. As a teacher, I am aware that students come from different ethnic groups, religions, and social classes. However, I always strive to make my social studies classes inclusive. I give every student the same opportunity without discrimination.*

GR.2 : *The social studies curriculum is always designed with student diversity in mind, particularly when selecting teaching models, media, and learning resources. In fact, the school also has programs or a school culture that emphasizes character development among students.*

Based on the interview statements, it can be concluded that the process carried out reflects the teachers' professionalism in planning multicultural learning. Teachers not only prepare the material from a technical standpoint but also take students' cultural dimensions into account from the planning stage onward. In relation to cultural intelligence, this practice contributes to the development of students' cognitive CQ, as teachers indirectly teach students to consider cultural contexts before acting or making decisions. When students observe their teachers selecting culturally sensitive learning models, they implicitly learn that cultural differences are something that must be considered, not ignored. The use of contextual materials demonstrates that teachers treat students' cultural and social realities as the primary source of learning. This is highly relevant to the development of Metacognitive CQ the dimension of cultural intelligence related to a deep understanding of different cultural values, norms, and practices. When social studies material is drawn from the real-life contexts of students' multicultural lives, students not only learn about culture in the abstract but also build concrete and meaningful cultural knowledge based on their own life experiences and those of their peers.

Accommodative classroom management reflects efforts to create a culturally safe learning environment. In the context of developing cultural intelligence, an inclusive classroom environment gives students the opportunity to express their cultural identities without fear of

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judgment. These conditions directly foster both CQ Motivation and CQ Behavior, as students become accustomed to interacting, collaborating, and adapting to peers from different cultural backgrounds in a comfortable and open atmosphere. The second teacher also emphasized that culturally-based differentiated instruction is consistently applied. The selection of culturally responsive instructional models such as cooperative learning, which encourages cross-cultural group interaction directly develops students' CQ Behavior dimension, namely the ability to adjust their thinking and behavior in situations involving cultural differences. Meanwhile, the selection of learning media and resources that reflect cultural diversity enriches students' metacognitive and cognitive dimensions of CQ, as they are exposed to diverse cultural representations, not just the dominant culture.

The development of cultural intelligence does not occur solely in the classroom but is also institutionalized at the school level through school programs and culture. Character-building programs initiated by schools serve as a supporting ecosystem for the holistic development of students' cultural intelligence. This aligns with the concept of Cultural Intelligence Development, which emphasizes that CQ develops optimally when supported by a social and institutional environment that consistently promotes the values of diversity, tolerance, and mutual respect. Overall, these two interview statements illustrate that teachers have effectively implemented social studies instruction grounded in multicultural education, spanning planning, implementation, and classroom management.

Student diversity is not viewed as an obstacle, but rather as a starting point for designing inclusive, contextual, meaningful, and equitable learning, which is further supported by the school's institutional commitment through character-building programs. Overall, the statements from both teachers indicate that their Social Studies teaching practices whether conscious or unconscious—have become a vehicle for fostering students' cultural intelligence. This is achieved through systematic planning, a contextual approach, an inclusive learning environment, and the support of school programs. Consequently, the patterns of cultural intelligence development in the micro (classroom) and macro (school) environments can be observed as follows.

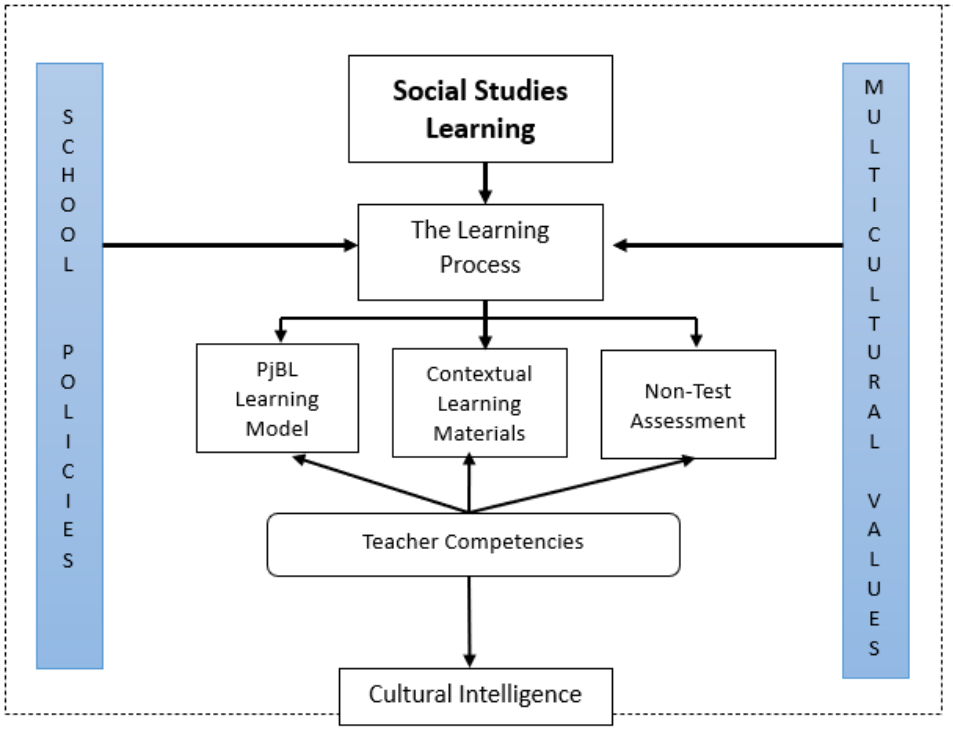


Figure 1. The Pattern of Cultural Intelligence Development

Figure 1 above is a conceptual framework for social studies learning based on cultural intelligence, illustrating the flow and interconnections among components in the learning process. At the very top is Social Studies Learning as the main component that serves as the starting point for the entire process. Social Studies learning then flows into the Learning Process as the core of implementation, which is influenced simultaneously by two external factors: school policy on the left and multicultural values on the right. This indicates that the Social Studies learning process does not occur in a vacuum but is framed by the school's institutional policies and simultaneously shaped by the values of cultural diversity that constitute the students' social context.

Based on the learning process, this framework then outlines three operational components that serve as the cornerstone of classroom implementation: the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) Model, Contextual Learning Media, and Non-Test Assessment. These three components were deliberately selected because they are considered the most relevant and responsive to the needs of a multicultural student body. These three components do not stand alone but are supported by Teacher Competencies, which lie directly beneath them. This underscores that no matter how well-designed the models, media, and assessments may be, their success is largely determined by the extent to which teachers possess the competencies to implement them effectively and with cultural sensitivity.

These frameworks highlight Cultural Intelligence (CQ) as the primary foundation of the entire learning structure. The placement of cultural intelligence at the base of the diagram, with an upward-pointing arrow leading to Teacher Competencies, signifies that cultural intelligence is the driving force that animates teacher competencies, which in turn drive all the learning components above it. In other words, this framework as a whole aims to convey that high-quality, inclusive, and meaningful social studies learning can only be realized if it is built upon

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teachers' understanding of cultural intelligence as its foundation, supported by school policies, and guided by multicultural values that serve as the spirit of the entire learning process.

B. Internalization of multicultural values to strengthen cultural intelligence

The internalization of multicultural values in junior high schools (SMP) in Mataram City is a process that does not happen instantly, but rather takes place gradually, continuously, and involves various components of education in an integrated manner. At public junior high schools in Mataram City, this process begins with reinforcing the school's vision, mission, and objectives. Through the school's vision and mission, it is clearly reflected how the school integrates multicultural values with the explicit goal of strengthening cultural intelligence. The vision of SMPN 6 Mataram is to foster individuals who are faithful, devout, cultured, and high-achieving. The school even emphasizes cultural literacy, cultural Saturdays, and an inclusive school culture. This vision and mission are internalized through both curricular and extracurricular activities at the school.

The process of teaching multicultural values is incorporated into the learning stages through the hidden curriculum. Teachers instill multicultural values in the learning process not through verbal instructions, but through group activities and out-of-class activities. Students are given the freedom to process their experiences by collaborating in large or small groups. Teachers address multicultural values by actively involving students in learning activities. Students are trusted to make decisions. The first stage of the internalization process carried out by the teacher is cognitive familiarization with cultural diversity, by providing space for students to collaborate with other students from different backgrounds. Figure 2 below illustrates the process of interaction and cooperation among students during teaching and learning activities.



Figure 2. Interaction Activities of Students in Group Activities

The students are then introduced to contextual facts about the diversity present in their immediate surroundings. Social studies teachers utilize learning resources found in the students' immediate environment. This introduction aims to develop the students' foundation of cultural knowledge, as without adequate knowledge of multicultural conditions, students are unlikely to be able to adopt attitudes, behaviors, or a character that is responsive to cultural differences. Therefore, the cognitive stage serves as a bridge that must be crossed in the process of internalizing multicultural values. The above findings align with what is explained by (Ang et al., 2019), who state that cultural intelligence is an awareness in understanding other cultures, serving as a counterbalance to cognitive intelligence, and can be applied through concrete attitudes in the dynamic reality of social life.

Teachers understand that the process of internalizing multicultural values is essential to equipping students to become responsive global citizens with strong cultural awareness. To achieve this, teachers, in collaboration with the school administration, design a process of internalization that does not stop at the cognitive stage but extends to the development of students' affective attitudes toward the diversity present in their immediate environment. At this stage, teachers do not merely help students understand cognitively but also help them develop an awareness of these cultural differences. Teachers achieve this through exemplary behavior and serving as role models in the learning process, starting with the teachers themselves.

The teacher leads by example through their attitude and behavior during the learning process. The teacher consistently demonstrates fairness during lessons, giving opportunities to all students without discrimination. Teachers treat students democratically and teach tolerance by respecting students' opinions. Consequently, students indirectly absorb these values through the teacher's exemplary conduct and modeling. Students not only receive knowledge transfer from teachers in social studies classes but also learn how to behave appropriately and respect one another when there are differing opinions among group members. Furthermore, students' democratic attitudes are reflected in the open and consensus-based distribution of tasks among group members. At the same time, through the social studies learning process, students are able to demonstrate democratic attitudes toward their fellow group members. Students do not merely learn; they also actively participate through concrete actions.

The internalization process is further carried out by designing a curriculum and learning activities that are culturally responsive. The social studies curriculum from teaching modules and materials to models and assessments incorporates content on diversity. Thus, through the social studies learning process, teachers consciously integrate perspectives and experiences of diversity into the learning content. This is supported by broader school activities and programs, namely cultural literacy. Cultural literacy activities initiated by the school represent a direct commitment by the school to ensure that the diversity present in students' learning environment is not something to be feared as a source of conflict, but rather a positive potential in the development of students' cultural intelligence. Additionally, through the "Cultural Saturday" activities, the school aims to strengthen students' cultural intelligence. All activities and programs carried out jointly by teachers and the school to facilitate students represent concrete steps in the effort to demonstrate that the internalization of values requires a solid commitment and cooperation from all parties, including the involvement of students' parents and the surrounding community. Therefore, the learning activities conducted by teachers in the classroom are always directed toward contextual learning.

The role of teachers as key pioneers in integrating multicultural values cannot be underestimated. Teachers who are culturally competent in their pedagogical practice can identify cultural biases in teaching materials and adjust their context before the materials reach students. Teachers are not merely facilitators of teaching and learning activities but also agents of the internalization of multicultural values who interact directly with students in the classroom. Teachers' competencies can make a significant contribution to instilling values of tolerance, democracy, mutual respect, and respect for other cultures. Teachers' understanding and competencies are categorized into four key aspects: Social Studies Curriculum Content; Social Studies Teaching Process; Multicultural Understanding; and Learning Assessment.

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The input components of social studies instruction fall into the "Good" category, indicating that the elements supporting instruction such as teacher readiness, instructional materials, media, learning resources, and student characteristics are available and being utilized adequately. This category suggests that the foundation for instruction is strong enough to support the teaching and learning process. However, there is still room for improvement, for example, through the development of more contextual teaching materials, the use of more innovative learning technologies, and the optimization of a learning environment that can encourage more active student engagement.

The Social Studies learning process components received a "Very Good" rating, indicating that instruction has been conducted effectively, systematically, and in a student-centered manner. Teachers were assessed as capable of applying varied learning strategies, encouraging active student participation, and creating a conducive learning environment. Additionally, the learning process has provided students with opportunities to think critically, collaborate, solve problems, and relate the material to real life. These achievements reflect the successful implementation of Social Studies instruction in line with the demands of 21st-century learning and the Merdeka Curriculum.

The aspect of multicultural understanding falls into the "Good" category, indicating that students have a sufficient level of understanding regarding cultural diversity, tolerance, respect for differences, and the importance of coexisting in a diverse society. These results indicate that multicultural values have been integrated into the social studies learning process, although their reinforcement still needs to be carried out more intensively through contextual learning, cross-cultural collaborative activities, and the utilization of local wisdom as a learning resource. Thus, students are expected to be able to develop cultural intelligence more effectively.

The learning evaluation component received a "Very Good" rating, indicating that the assessment system has been implemented comprehensively, objectively, and consistently. Teachers have applied various forms of assessment both formative and summative to measure the achievement of learning objectives. Additionally, evaluation results are utilized as the basis for providing feedback, reflecting on learning, and improving future learning processes. This situation demonstrates that evaluation serves not only as a tool for measuring learning outcomes but also as an instrument for the continuous improvement of learning quality.

Overall, the categorization results indicate that the quality of social studies instruction ranges from good to very good. The aspects of the learning process and learning assessment have achieved the "Very Good" category, reflecting the effectiveness of instruction and a high-quality assessment system. Meanwhile, the aspects of learning inputs and multicultural understanding fall into the "Good" category, indicating that they still require strengthening through improvements in the quality of learning resources, innovation in learning strategies, and a deeper integration of multicultural values. These findings suggest that social studies instruction has strong potential to support the development of students' competencies, particularly in building knowledge, social skills, and cultural intelligence relevant to life in a multicultural society.

The social studies learning process demonstrates that the enhancement of cultural intelligence can be achieved through the consistent internalization of values of tolerance, democracy, and mutual respect among students, thereby preparing them to live harmoniously in a multicultural environment. The process of internalizing these multicultural values is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

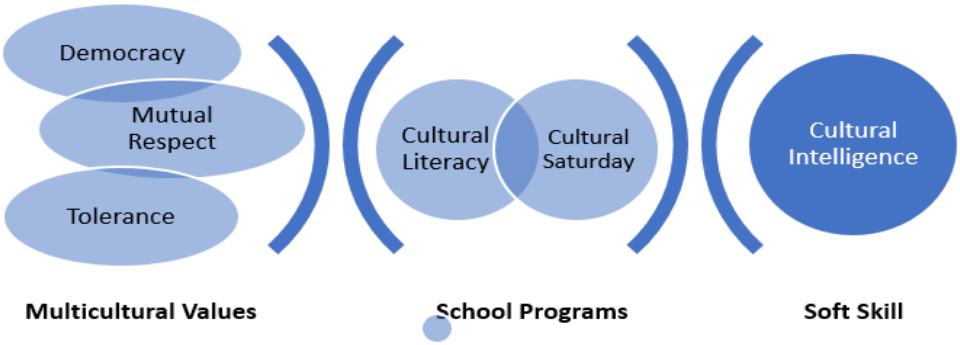


Figure 3: The Process of Developing Cultural Intelligence

The process of developing cultural intelligence depicted in Figure 3 establishes systemic and causal relationships within the framework of multicultural-based social studies education. Democratic values, mutual respect, and tolerance form the affective-normative foundation that serves as a prerequisite for the development of cultural intelligence. Without these three values, cultural intelligence would be merely technical in nature, lacking an ethical foundation. Furthermore, cultural intelligence as the adaptive ability to navigate cultural differences is strengthened through Cultural Literacy (in-depth knowledge of diverse cultures) and practiced in Cultural Saturday activities (as a platform for direct experience).

Cultural literacy thus addresses the cognitive domain, Cultural Saturday addresses the psychomotor and social domains, while Cultural Intelligence serves as an integrative competency that unites both. This aligns with the findings of Li & Middlemiss (2022), who noted that cultural intelligence plays a positive role in helping students understand other cultures and improve their ability to interact effectively. Meanwhile, multicultural values serve as a philosophical framework guiding all school policies and practices, while school programs represent the institutionalization of these values through structured activities, such as the hidden curriculum, extracurriculars, or inclusive classroom policies.

CONCLUSION

The process of teaching social studies itself must be carried out using a structured, integrated, and comprehensive approach. Schools strengthen cultural intelligence in social studies learning through the empirical conditions of social studies instruction, which include school policies, the learning process (project-based learning models, contextual learning materials, and non-test assessments), and teacher competencies (pedagogical and social competencies); second, the multicultural values internalized by the school are (tolerance, mutual respect, and democratic values); school programs to strengthen cultural intelligence through cultural literacy activities and "Cultural Saturdays." Social Studies instruction that accommodates student diversity can ultimately establish systemic and causal relationships, while also serving as an affective-normative foundation for fostering students' cultural intelligence. A suggestion for future research is to conduct a comparative study in different locations with distinct cultural characteristics and high homogeneity to determine the extent to which cultural intelligence can be developed, as well as to re-analyze the disparity in the contribution of cultural intelligence across different educational levels. The Conclusion section

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by explicitly highlighting: (1) the theoretical contribution of the study in extending the conceptual relationship between multicultural education and cultural intelligence through an integrated Social Studies education framework; (2) the practical implications for schools, teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in implementing inclusive and culturally responsive Social Studies learning; and (3) the novelty of the research, namely demonstrating that students' cultural intelligence develops through the interaction of school policies, multicultural values, instructional practices, and teacher competencies within an integrated educational ecosystem rather than through classroom instruction alone.

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