

# **EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE LEARNING WITH THE LEARNING COMMUNITY MODEL**

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## **A. Introduction**

The learning process at schools often feels monotonous, with students remaining passive and unenthusiastic about the lessons delivered by the teacher. Teachers frequently experience boredom as there are no significant changes in the students or improvement in the learning outcomes. Teachers tend to dominate the classroom, and during the learning process, they usually do not provide opportunities for students to actively participate. Social Science lessons are often reduced to mere memorization to meet the prescribed curriculum. Teachers get stuck in a static lecture-based teaching method without employing varied approaches, which creates barriers in Social Science education. Consequently, student engagement and potential development in learning are low, resulting in subpar learning outcomes and ineffective mechanisms.

To achieve the objectives of Social Science education effectively, teachers must work to enhance the quality of education, starting with their role as facilitators guiding students towards their goals. For high-quality learning, Social Science teachers are required to have adequate professional skills to deliver education in a communicative and integrated manner. According to Sujarwo (2023), the quality of learning depends on three main elements: 1) the level of student participation and the types of learning activities, 2) the teacher's role in employing various methods and techniques, and 3) classroom organization. The level of student participation in learning is largely determined by the teacher's efforts to engage students, making the selection and use of teaching methods and the development of appropriate materials crucial for achieving learning goals. The challenge of improving the quality of

learning services that optimizes student capabilities and addresses low academic performance must be met. The quality of the learning process and student outcomes can be improved if teachers can stimulate students' learning motivation, interest, attention, activity, and independence. Learning materials become more engaging when linked to students' real-life experiences. Therefore, there is a need to implement a teaching model that addresses these issues.

In light of these problems, it is necessary to have teaching methods that captivate students and draw out their abilities through Social Science learning. One approach to enhancing motivation and activity is improving the quality of learning through the Learning Community model.

## **B. Discussion**

Nowadays, there is a trend in education towards the belief that children learn better in a natural environment. The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach is a concept that helps teachers connect the material being taught with real-world situations and encourages students to relate their existing knowledge to its application in their lives as members of society. According to Sungkowo (2023:1), the contextual learning concept suggests that learning outcomes occur naturally through student activities and experiences, rather than as a direct transfer of knowledge from teacher to student.

Contextual learning is a concept that helps teachers link the material taught with real-life situations and encourages students to make connections between their knowledge and its application in their daily lives. This discussion will focus on creating learning communities (group learning) as Nurhadi (2023:49) notes that the Learning Community model is a component of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) that suggests learning outcomes are achieved through collaboration with others. For example, if a child is learning to use an electric pencil sharpener and asks a peer who already knows how to operate the tool, the two children have formed a learning community.

Learning outcomes are achieved through sharing among peers, between groups, and between those who know and those who do not. In this space, in the classroom, and beyond, everyone is a member of the learning community.

In a learning community, it is advised that teachers conduct lessons in heterogeneous groups. Skilled students help those who are less proficient, knowledgeable students assist those who are less informed, quick learners support their slower peers, and those with ideas contribute suggestions, and so on. Student groups can vary in membership, size, and can even include students from higher classes or involve collaboration with other teachers or experts. A learning community can develop when there is a two-way communication process, meaning that two or more groups are engaged in learning communication and sharing knowledge. Members of the learning community provide necessary information to their peers. This mutual learning occurs when there is no dominant party in communication, no one is hesitant to ask questions, and no one assumes they know everything. Everyone should feel that others have valuable knowledge, experiences, or skills worth learning. When everyone is open to learning from others, then others become learning resources, enriching the process of learning in the classroom.

Working with the community is a task that involves building a learning community, which is an integral part of education. According to Bence Joyce (2016:375), a professional learning community involves observing practices, then practicing, observing and practicing, and continuing with collaborative practice. In essence, it involves observing, practicing, and collaborating to refine and enhance skills.

The concept of a learning community can be summarized as group-based learning where collaboration with others is essential. A learning community occurs when there is two-way communication, observation, and practice, forming a collaborative environment that fosters the development of new knowledge and ongoing learning. This involves both teachers and students. Teachers instruct and assign tasks positively, employing a variety of strategies to proactively educate students, collaborate, and design effective teaching activities.

In a school or university learning community, members rely on each other within a class to discover ideas, methods, and resources to enhance understanding and improve reciprocal relationships. A learning community is an integrated approach that connects to real-world events, encouraging critical thinking and continuous improvement.

### **C. Conclusion**

The enhancement of students' understanding of material, increased participation, and engagement in Social Science education can be achieved through the application of the Learning Community approach. By forming small groups in learning activities, this approach allows students to actively engage in the learning process. Students learn from peers through group work, discussions, and mutual correlation.

With the Learning Community approach, students are encouraged to think, discuss, exchange and receive opinions, and ultimately agree on the most appropriate answers. In these small groups, students can help each other, discuss, and argue to complement one another. Thus, the Learning Community approach in Social Science education, using small group strategies, demonstrates that student success is not solely derived from the teacher's instruction but also from peer interactions within the group.

The Learning Community approach transforms the learning environment from one that is passive, unmotivated, and less creative into one that is active, highly motivated, and more creative. This approach creates a more dynamic, empowering learning atmosphere and provides students with opportunities to actively participate in problem-solving.

Students can find enjoyment in Social Science lessons, feel relaxed, and be free to express their opinions. Delivering material that is current and aligned with the core competencies proves to be more engaging for students. This is because the content is presented in a real and relevant context, making what is discussed applicable to real-life situations.

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