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SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING MANAGEMENT BASED ON THE INTEGRATION OF TEACHER COMPETENCIES AND CONTEXTUAL LEARNING APPROACHES

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Abstract:
Social Studies learning requires teachers to connect conceptual knowledge with social phenomena encountered by students in their daily lives. This condition places teacher competence as an important factor in managing contextual learning through systematic planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection. This study aims to analyze the integration of teacher competence in the management of contextual Social Studies learning at SMPN 1 Kertasemaya. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with Social Studies teachers and selected students, and analysis of instructional documents. Data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, while source and technique triangulation were applied to strengthen data credibility. The findings show that teacher competence is integrated into contextual learning management through four interconnected stages. In the planning stage, teachers identify learning objectives, student characteristics, and relevant social contexts. In the implementation stage, teachers connect Social Studies concepts with students' experiences through discussion, inquiry, collaborative activities, and the use of the surrounding environment as a learning resource. Assessment is conducted to identify students' conceptual understanding and learning processes, while reflection is used to evaluate the effectiveness of learning strategies and contextual activities. The findings indicate that contextual learning is not merely a teaching technique but an instructional management approach whose effectiveness depends on teachers' pedagogical and professional competence. The integration of teacher competence and contextual learning provides opportunities for students to understand Social Studies concepts through relevant social realities and meaningful learning experiences.

KATA KUNCI
Manajemen Pembelajaran, Kompetensi Guru, Ilmu Penegtahuan Sosial, Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran Kontekstual, Pengajaran Kontekstual

Abstrak:
Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (IPS) mengharuskan guru menghubungkan pengetahuan konseptual dengan fenomena sosial yang dialami siswa dalam kehidupan sehari-hari mereka. Kondisi ini menempatkan kompetensi guru sebagai faktor penting dalam mengelola pembelajaran kontekstual melalui perencanaan, implementasi, penilaian, dan refleksi sistematis. Studi ini bertujuan menganalisis integrasi kompetensi guru dalam pengelolaan pembelajaran Studi Sosial kontekstual di SMPN 1 Kertasemaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi di kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan guru Studi Sosial dan siswa terpilih, serta analisis dokumen pengajaran. Data dianalisis melalui kondensasi data, tampilan data, serta pengambilan dan verifikasi kesimpulan, sementara triangulasi sumber dan teknik diterapkan untuk memperkuat kredibilitas data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa

kompetensi guru terintegrasi ke dalam manajemen pembelajaran kontekstual melalui empat tahap yang saling terhubung. Pada tahap perencanaan, guru mengidentifikasi tujuan belajar, karakteristik siswa, dan konteks sosial yang relevan. Pada tahap implementasi, guru menghubungkan konsep Studi Sosial dengan pengalaman siswa melalui diskusi, inkuiri, aktivitas kolaboratif, dan penggunaan lingkungan sekitar sebagai sumber belajar. Penilaian dilakukan untuk mengidentifikasi pemahaman konseptual dan proses pembelajaran siswa, sementara refleksi digunakan untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas strategi belajar dan aktivitas kontekstual. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran kontekstual bukan sekadar teknik pengajaran tetapi pendekatan manajemen instruksional yang efektivitasnya bergantung pada kompetensi pedagogis dan profesional guru. Integrasi kompetensi guru dan pembelajaran kontekstual memberikan kesempatan bagi siswa untuk memahami konsep Studi Sosial melalui realitas sosial yang relevan dan pengalaman belajar yang bermakna.

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INTRODUCTION

Previous studies on contextual learning in Social Studies education have predominantly examined its relationship with student learning outcomes, engagement, conceptual understanding, or critical thinking. Other studies have focused on teacher competence in implementing contextual learning without examining how such competence is integrated across the entire instructional management cycle. Consequently, there remains limited empirical understanding of how teachers translate their competencies into systematic contextual learning management, particularly through the interconnected stages of planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection. This study addresses this gap by examining not only the implementation of contextual learning but also the ways in which teacher competence supports and shapes each stage of instructional management at SMPN 1 Kertasemaya.

Social Studies education is inherently linked to human life and the various social phenomena that emerge within society. It goes beyond the mere mastery of facts and concepts; rather, it aims to help students understand the complex relationships between humans, their environment, economic activities, social life, history, culture, and various societal issues. Consequently, Social Studies instruction should provide students with opportunities to construct knowledge through personal experience, social interaction, and the examination of phenomena relevant to their own lives. The perspective of "meaningful learning" emphasizes that new knowledge is more easily grasped when students can connect it to their existing knowledge and familiar contexts(Adolfo & Sinang, 2025). Thus, ideal Social Studies instruction does not stop at the transmission of information; instead, it encourages students to comprehend, analyze, and apply concepts to interpret the social reality around them.

These characteristics position the teacher as a crucial factor in determining the quality of the learning process. Teachers serve not merely as conveyors of content, but also as designers of learning experiences, facilitators of interaction, classroom managers, evaluators, and reflective practitioners. A teacher's competence forms the foundation for their ability to translate curricular goals into

learning experiences that align with the specific characteristics and needs of their students. Aashamar & Klette asserts that a teacher's professional knowledge encompasses more than just subject-matter mastery; it also includes pedagogical knowledgespecifically, how content can be represented and taught so that it is truly understood by students (Aashamar & Klette, 2023). In a broader context, the quality and professional capacity of teachers are directly linked to the quality of the learning process and student achievement(Tanaya & Padhy, 2026). Research findings in Indonesia indicate that the competence of Social Studies teachers remains a significant concern, particularly regarding subject-matter mastery, instructional design, and the management of learning in a manner consistent with the unique nature of the Social Studies discipline(Nurmallina, Noviana, & Ergul, 2026), for instance, identified gaps in teacher competence regarding thematic social studies instruction at the junior high school levelgaps linked to academic background, curriculum understanding, instructional design, and professional development.

Such teacher competence must be realized through systematic instructional management. Instructional management extends beyond the mere execution of teaching and learning activities; it encompasses an interconnected sequence of planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection. During the planning phase, teachers must analyze learning objectives, student characteristics, subject matter, strategies, instructional media, learning resources, and the forms of assessment to be used. In the implementation phase, teachers need to foster a learning environment that enables students to participate actively in constructing their own understanding. Furthermore, assessment should serve not only to determine final learning outcomes but also to provide insights into student progress, thereby forming a basis for adjusting instruction. The National Research (Mujayapura & Komariah, 2025) identifies assessment as a vital component of the learning process, as the information it yields allows teachers to tailor instruction to the specific needs of their students. Consequently Effective instructional management requires an integration of planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection. One approach that aligns with these characteristics is Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). CTL establishes a connection between academic content and the students' life contexts, serving as a foundation for building meaningful learning. Thengal explains that contextual learning helps students discover meaning by linking new information to their existing knowledge and experiences (Thengal, 2026). In the context of social studies (IPS) education, this approach is highly relevant, as the subject matter of social studies is inherently rooted in the students' own social lives. Elements such as family, school, community, economic activities, local culture, social change, and environmental issues can serve as contexts to help students grasp social studies concepts in a more concrete way. Hamid & Gusmaneli further describes contextual learning as an approach that bridges learning material with the students' real-world situations, ensuring that the knowledge acquired remains connected to the context in which it is applied(Pepito et al., 2026; Setiawati, Irma, & Revita, 2025).

The relevance of CTL in social studies education is also supported by empirical evidence from national research. A study by (Yolanda, Sihotang, Zebua, Hutasoit, & Sinaga, 2024) on the competence of social studies teachers in implementing a contextual learning approach at SMP Negeri 2 Ciwaringin, Cirebon Regency, reveals that teachers have incorporated contextual elements into their social studies instructionthough this is not always explicitly detailed in their lesson plans. The study further indicates that factors such as teacher proficiency, student

needs, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure influence the implementation of contextual learning, while time constraints serve as a notable challenge. These findings are significant, as they demonstrate that the success of contextual learning depends not only on the choice of approach but also on the teacher's capacity to plan and manage its implementation.

Other empirical evidence suggests that the application of CTL can contribute to the quality of social studies instruction. Research by Anriyani, Yahya, and Syarifuddin indicates that the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach influences social studies learning outcomes, as demonstrated in a quasi-experimental study involving secondary school students. Other studies on the implementation of CTL in social studies instruction also show improvements in teacher activity, student engagement, and learning outcomes following the adoption of this approach. These findings suggest that CTL possesses pedagogical potential to make social studies learning more active by connecting course material to students' own experiences. Nevertheless, research that focuses solely on measuring learning outcomes does not fully explain how teacher competencies are integrated into the overall management of contextual learning.

This issue is significant because the implementation of CTL cannot be understood merely as the use of specific methods or activities that place students in real-world situations. A contextual approach requires teachers to possess the ability to select relevant contexts, link these contexts to learning objectives, design learning activities, facilitate discussions, develop questions that foster critical thinking, utilize learning resources, conduct authentic assessments, and provide feedback. In other words, teacher competence is a crucial prerequisite for the meaningful implementation of CTL. Research concerning the development of such competencies Regarding the role of teachers in contextual learning, it has been observed that limited competence in implementing such an approach can be a factor contributing to disparities in the quality of instruction.

This perspective aligns with professional experience, which serves as one of the foundations for this research. Instructional practices have incorporated student-centered approaches, two-way communication, a variety of learning media, and strategies such as case-based learning, project-based learning, role-playing, simulations, and problem-based learning. Instruction typically begins with an assessment of prior knowledge to gauge students' existing understanding and concludes with evaluation and reflection to improve future teaching. Such experience suggests that contextual learning should be viewed as an integral component of a broader learning management system, rather than as an isolated strategy.

The consistent application of contextual learning is also reflected in previous research concerning small-group discussion methods based on the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) framework. That research emphasized the importance of student-to-student interaction and the connection between course material and real-life experiences. Small-group discussions provide students with opportunities to exchange opinions, share ideas, present arguments, and collaborate on problem-solving, while the CTL framework bridges academic concepts with the real-world situations students encounter. Consequently, these experiences provide an empirical basis for a more extensive study on the integration of teacher competence and contextual approaches within the management of social studies (IPS) instruction.

In the context of SMPN 1 Kertasemaya, this integration can be developed by utilizing the students' own social environment as a learning resource. Phenomena surrounding the studentssuch as local economic activities, social change, social interaction, environmental conditions, population mobility, local culture, and various social issuescan serve as a context for understanding social studies concepts. This approach enables students to go beyond merely acquiring knowledge through teacher explanations; they are encouraged to observe phenomena, identify issues, gather information, engage in discussions, articulate arguments, and connect their findings to the concepts being studied. This principle aligns with the perspective that an effective learning environment should provide students with opportunities to connect classroom learning with their social environment and experiences outside the classroom(Barokah, Amri, Gusnita, & Irma, 2025; Nabilla & Fadhilah, 2025; Sumardi & Baging, 2026).

Although there has been extensive research on Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in social studies education, there remains room to examine the integration of teacher competencies with the management of contextual learning in a holistic mannerparticularly at the junior high school (SMP) level and within specific school contexts. While the study by Muchtarom focuses on the quality of social studies teachers' competencies in applying a contextual approach at SMP Negeri 2 Ciwaringin, other studies have primarily examined the impact of CTL on student learning outcomes or activities(Muchtarom & Saefurridjal, 2023; Suhelmidam, 2019). Consequently, this study at SMPN 1 Kertasemaya aims to go beyond merely determining whether CTL is utilized; it seeks to understand how teacher competencies are integrated into the management of social studies instruction through the processes of planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection.

Based on this, the present study aims to analyze the management of social studies instruction, centered on the integration of teacher competencies and a contextual learning approach at SMPN 1 Kertasemaya. The research focuses on how teachers plan context-based instruction, implement lessons that connect social studies concepts with students' own experiences, conduct assessments of both the learning process and outcomes, and engage in reflection as a foundation for instructional improvement. This research is expected to provide an empirical contribution to the development of social studies instructional managementone that is oriented not only toward content mastery but also toward the teacher's ability to create learning experiences that are relevant, meaningful, and connected to the students' social reality.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the management of Social Studies (IPS) learning through the integration of teacher competencies and contextual learning at SMPN 1 Kertasemaya. The qualitative descriptive design was selected because the study aimed to provide a comprehensive and systematic description of learning practices as they occur naturally in the field, while maintaining close proximity to participants' experiences and observable educational practices(Sugiyanto, 2025). This approach is particularly appropriate for examining how teacher competencies are translated into the planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection of contextual Social

Studies learning. A similar methodological orientation was employed by Yin in examining the quality of Social Studies teachers' competencies in implementing contextual learning, using a qualitative descriptive design in a junior secondary school context(Yin, 2023).

The research was conducted at SMPN 1 Kertasemaya, with Social Studies teachers and students involved in the learning process serving as research participants. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement and relevance to the research focus. The selection considered teachers who were responsible for Social Studies instruction and students who directly experienced the learning process. The primary focus of the study comprised four interconnected dimensions of learning management: learning planning, learning implementation, learning assessment, and learning reflection. These dimensions were examined in relation to teacher competencies, particularly the ability to understand curriculum and learning objectives, identify students' characteristics and learning needs, select appropriate learning strategies, develop and utilize instructional media, manage classroom interaction, conduct assessment, and reflect on learning outcomes. Such dimensions are consistent with the view that teacher competence encompasses the knowledge, skills, and professional capacities required to organize meaningful instructional experiences(Abdullah Md Zain, F. A., Tajuddin, S. A. F. S. A., Mohammed Foziah, N. H., & Ishak, 2025; Suryani & Dewi, 2024; Tharaba & Wahyudin, 2024).

Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data consisted of classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with Social Studies teachers and selected students, while secondary data were obtained through the analysis of relevant instructional documents, including learning plans, teaching materials, learning media, assessment instruments, student assignments, and other learning records. Classroom observations were conducted to examine teacher–student interaction, student participation, instructional strategies, contextual learning activities, utilization of the surrounding environment as a learning resource, classroom management, and the extent to which Social Studies concepts were connected to students' real-life experiences. Interviews were conducted to explore teachers' considerations in planning and implementing contextual learning, their approaches to assessment and reflection, and students' experiences and perceptions of learning activities. Document analysis was used to examine the consistency between planned learning activities and their actual implementation. The use of multiple sources was intended to provide a more comprehensive representation of the phenomenon being investigated and to strengthen the credibility of the findings(sholeh, Efendi, & Junaris, 2023).

The contextual learning component was examined through the extent to which teachers connected Social Studies concepts with students' experiences, social environment, and real-life situations. Contextual Teaching and Learning emphasizes the construction of meaningful knowledge through connections between academic content and the contexts in which learners live and experience social reality(Collins et al., 2021; Killen & Rutland, 2022; Saádi, 2025). In the context of Social Studies education, this approach is particularly relevant because learning materials are closely related to social, economic, cultural, historical, and environmental phenomena. The study therefore examined not only whether contextual activities were present, but also how teachers selected relevant contexts, facilitated student participation, encouraged discussion and inquiry, and guided students in connecting

empirical experiences with Social Studies concepts. This focus is supported by previous research in an Indonesian junior secondary school showing that teacher competence, students' needs, and supporting facilities influence the implementation of contextual Social Studies learning, while limited instructional time may become a significant challenge(Berger, 2024).

The data were analyzed through an interactive qualitative data analysis process consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification(Lailaturrahmah, Aslamiah, & Novitawati, 2025; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). During data condensation, observation notes, interview transcripts, and relevant documents were organized and coded according to the main research dimensions, namely teacher competence, learning planning, contextual learning implementation, assessment, and reflection. The coded data were subsequently grouped into themes to identify recurring patterns, relationships, similarities, and differences across the data sources. Data displays were then developed to facilitate systematic comparison between teachers' statements, students' experiences, classroom observations, and instructional documents. Conclusions were drawn progressively and verified against the available empirical evidence to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the collected data. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña emphasize the importance of systematic data management, data displays, and conclusion verification in qualitative research.

The credibility of the findings was established through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from Social Studies teachers and students, while technique triangulation involved comparing findings from classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. The researcher also compared the instructional plans documented by teachers with the actual implementation observed in the classroom. This process was intended to identify consistencies and discrepancies between intended and enacted learning practices. The use of triangulation is important in qualitative research because interpretations should be supported by converging evidence from different sources and data collection procedures(Fathurrohman, 2023; Kristiani & Pahlevi, 2021; Rahmawati, 2020).

The research procedure consisted of several sequential activities, beginning with the identification of the research focus and preparation of observation and interview instruments, followed by data collection through classroom observation, interviews, and document analysis. The collected data were then organized, coded, categorized, interpreted, and compared across sources. The final stage involved synthesizing the findings to describe how teacher competencies were integrated into the management of contextual Social Studies learning at SMPN 1 Kertasemaya. The methodological orientation was consistent with the documented instructional experience underlying this study, particularly the use of student-centered learning, varied instructional strategies, direct learning experiences, contextual environments, assessment, and reflection to support meaningful learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results indicate that the management of Social Studies (IPS) instruction through the integration of teacher competencies and a contextual learning approach should be understood as an interconnected process, rather than merely the application of a specific teaching method. This integration is realized through a teacher’s ability to plan instruction tailored to the characteristics and

needs of students, conduct learning activities linked to real-life situations, assess both the learning process and its outcomes, and utilize reflection as a foundation for improving future instruction. This perspective aligns with Shulman (1987), who explains that a teacher's professional competence encompasses not only subject-matter mastery but also the pedagogical skill to transform content into learning experiences that are accessible and understandable to students. In the context of Social Studies, such competence is particularly crucial, as the subject matter pertains to diverse social phenomena, requiring teachers to bridge conceptual knowledge with the students' own social environments.

The first finding concerns lesson planning. Contextual Social Studies instruction begins with a teacher's capacity to define learning objectives while identifying the characteristics, prior knowledge, and learning needs of the students. Planning involves more than just determining the content to be delivered; it also entails establishing how students can experience, examine, and comprehend that content through situations that are meaningful to them. This orientation is consistent with the principles of student-centered learning, which position students' prior knowledge and experiences as vital resources for constructing new understanding(Kumari, 2022; Rege, 2025). In a contextual learning framework, teachers must identify situations relevant to the students' lives and connect them to the concepts outlined in the curriculum. The professional practices examined in this study further underscore the importance of systematic lesson planning, the identification of students' existing understanding, the selection of appropriate strategies and media, and the utilization of the surrounding environment as an integral part of the learning process.

The significance of teacher competence in lesson planning is also supported by recent empirical research. identified variations in the competencies of social studies teachers at the junior high school level, specifically regarding subject matter mastery, instructional design, and classroom management(Efgivia, Suriyani, Hidayat, Maulana, & Budiarjo, 2021; Rege, 2025). The study indicates that academic background, understanding of the curriculum, instructional design, and professional development are factors associated with teachers' competencies in implementing social studies (IPS) instruction. These findings reinforce the argument that contextual teaching and learning cannot be separated from a teacher's competence. While a contextual approach may be chosen as a pedagogical strategy, its success depends heavily on the teacher's ability to translate it into a well-directed lesson plan.

The second finding concerns the implementation of contextual teaching and learning. Context-based social studies instruction is characterized by the establishment of links between academic concepts and the situations students encounter in their daily lives. In practice, a teacher might initiate a lesson by introducing a social phenomenon, guiding students to observe or identify issues, facilitating discussions or investigative activities, and subsequently helping students connect their findings to the social studies concepts being studied. This process positions students not merely as passive recipients of information, but as active participants who interpret social phenomena and construct understanding based on their own experiences. (Ayu, Felayati, Fuaddah, & Herutomo, 2024)explains that contextual teaching and learning emphasizes the creation of meaning through the connection between academic knowledge and the students' life contexts.

The application of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is highly relevant to social studies instruction, as the subject matter is closely intertwined with social reality. Economic activities, social interactions, environmental issues, cultural practices, population mobility, and societal changes can all serve as contexts for learning. Such phenomena need not be presented solely through textbooks; rather, they can act as starting points for observation, problem identification, discussion, information analysis, and concept building. Previous research in Indonesia indicates that the implementation of CTL in social studies instruction can enhance both student engagement and learning outcomes. Adhani and Suryadi demonstrate that applying CTL in middle school (SMP) social studies instruction integrates constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning communities, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment into the instructional process.

These findings are further supported by recent research on the implementation of CTL in middle school social studies instruction. Hidayati and Khairi (2026) found that the implementation of video-assisted Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in eighth-grade social studies (IPS) classes can enhance students' critical thinking skills. The study reported an increase in the class mastery rate from 52% at the initial stage to 85% by the second cycle, alongside an improvement in the activities of both the teacher and the students. These findings demonstrate that contextual learning can create conditions that encourage students to interpret information, analyze problems, and draw conclusions based on the context being studied.

A third finding concerns the role of teacher competence in managing instructional interactions. Contextual learning requires more than just presenting examples from everyday life; teachers must facilitate meaningful interactions by posing questions that stimulate reasoning, providing opportunities for students to express their opinions, organizing collaborative activities, supplying learning resources, and guiding students to connect their observations with specific concepts. Thus, a teacher's pedagogical competence is reflected in their ability to discern when to provide direct instruction and when to allow students the space to explore, engage in discussions, and construct their own understanding independently.

These findings align with the instructional practices that form the basis of this research namely, the use of two-way communication, cooperative learning, case-based learning, project-based learning, role-playing, simulations, and problem-based learning to provide students with more authentic learning experiences. The application of these diverse strategies illustrates that integrating teacher competence with contextual learning requires flexibility in selecting approaches that are well-suited to the characteristics of the subject matter and the needs of the students.

Thus, Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) should not be understood merely as a teaching technique. The mere inclusion of group discussions, environmental observations, or the use of real-life examples does not automatically signify that learning has taken place contextually. Contextual learning requires a meaningful connection between the learning context, the students' experiences, and the concepts or competencies to be achieved. A teacher's competence determines whether such contextual activities become learning experiences with clear pedagogical purposes or simply serve as supplementary tasks within the learning process. Findings by Fadillah, (Linga, Moreal, Márquez, & Jaravata, 2025;

Martatiyana & Madani, 2023; Salsabila, Amalia, & Bashith, 2025) further indicate that a teacher's mastery, the needs of the students, and the availability of facilities are key factors influencing the implementation of contextual social studies (IPS) instruction, while time constraints can act as a significant barrier.

The fourth finding concerns assessment as an integral component of contextual learning management. Assessment should be embedded within the learning process rather than being conducted solely at the end of a lesson. In context-based social studies instruction, teachers can evaluate both conceptual understanding and students' abilities to observe phenomena, analyze information, articulate ideas, collaborate, solve problems, and draw conclusions based on evidence. This approach aligns with the concept of authentic assessment, which emphasizes a student's capacity to apply knowledge and skills within meaningful contexts(Schultz, Young, Gunning, & Harvey, 2021; Villarroel, Bloxham, Bruna, Bruna, & Herrera-Seda, 2018; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024).

The professional practices examined in this research also highlight a focus on assessing cognitive abilities, process skills, and conceptual understanding. Evaluation outcomes are subsequently used to facilitate reflection and the improvement of instruction. Consequently, assessment within the management of contextual social studies learning serves a dual function: measuring the attainment of student competencies and providing information for teachers to refine the learning process.

The fifth finding relates to reflection and the continuous improvement of instruction. Reflection offers teachers an opportunity to evaluate the achievement of learning objectives, the relevance of the contexts employed, the effectiveness of teaching strategies, the level of student engagement, and any challenges that may have arisen during the learning process. Reflection is, therefore, a crucial component of a teacher's professional competence, as learning experiences can serve as information to improve the planning and implementation of future instruction.

This practice is also evident in the professional experience that forms the basis of this research specifically, the conduct of evaluation and reflection following instruction, alongside providing students with the opportunity to offer feedback on teaching methods and approaches. Such feedback is then used as a foundation for enhancing subsequent lessons. This reflective practice demonstrates that the development of instructional quality does not conclude with the delivery of a lesson; rather, it unfolds through an ongoing cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation, reflection, and improvement.

Reflection also serves as a vital link between a teacher's professional competence and contextual learning. If the context employed proves too distant from the students' own experiences, the teacher can make adjustments for future lessons. Similarly, if students struggle to connect their observations with social studies (IPS) concepts, the teacher can provide scaffolded support, reorder activities, offer additional learning resources, or incorporate contexts that are more closely aligned with the students' daily lives. In this sense, contextual learning functions as an adaptive process that evolves through a continuous cycle of instruction.

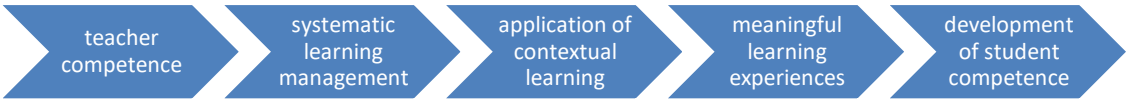
The subsequent findings highlight the importance of utilizing the environment as a learning resource. Social studies education offers significant opportunities to leverage the school and the broader community as authentic learning resources. Students can observe economic activities, social interactions,

environmental conditions, cultural practices, and various societal phenomena, subsequently analyzing them through relevant social studies concepts. Using the environment as a learning resource strengthens the connection between knowledge acquired in school and students' experiences outside of it.

This approach also creates opportunities to develop multiple competencies simultaneously. By observing social phenomena, students hone their ability to gather information; by discussing their observations, they cultivate communication and collaboration skills; and by comparing information and arguments, they develop analytical and critical thinking. Furthermore, by formulating conclusions, they deepen their conceptual understanding. Consequently, contextual social studies instruction can serve as an integrated learning environment that fosters both students' knowledge and their skills.

Nevertheless, integrating teacher competencies with contextual instruction presents certain challenges. Contextual learning requires thorough preparation, relevant learning resources, sufficient instructional time, and the teacher's ability to design activities tailored to students' needs. Research by Ajjawi et al. indicates that variations in teachers' academic backgrounds, understanding of the curriculum, instructional design capabilities, and professional development can influence the quality of social studies instruction at the junior high school level (Ajjawi et al., 2023; Kildea, Lavers, Upton, & Hansen, 2026; Sundari, Inggris, & Palangka, 2023). Therefore, enhancing the quality of contextual instruction cannot rely solely on the individual initiative of teachers. It also requires institutional support, professional development, collaboration among teachers, collective lesson planning, the availability of learning resources, and a culture of reflection.

Overall, these research findings reinforce the necessity of integrating teacher competencies and a contextual approach within a comprehensive learning management system. Teacher competencies provide the capacity to design and facilitate instruction, while a contextual approach offers a pedagogical orientation that links social studies concepts to the students' own experiences and social realities. Learning management encompassing planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection serves as the mechanism that connects these two components. This relationship can be formulated as follows: teacher competence →



The novelty of this study lies in positioning teacher competence and contextual learning within an integrated instructional management framework. Rather than examining CTL merely as a teaching approach or measuring its effect on student outcomes, this study analyzes how teacher competence is translated into the processes of planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection. This perspective provides a more holistic understanding of contextual Social Studies learning at the junior secondary school level, particularly in utilizing students' surrounding social environment as a learning resource.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the management of social studies (IPS) instruction based on the integration of teacher competencies and a contextual

learning approach is an interconnected process encompassing instructional planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection. Teacher competencies serve as the foundation for translating learning objectives and student characteristics into relevant learning activities, while the contextual approach provides a framework for linking social studies content with the experiences and social realities surrounding the students. Integrating these elements ensures that social studies instruction is not merely oriented toward the mastery of concepts; rather, it creates space for students to observe phenomena, engage in discussions, express opinions, analyze problems, collaborate, and connect their knowledge to daily life.

Effective instructional management is evidenced by planning that accounts for learning objectives, student characteristics, subject matter, strategies, media, learning resources, and assessment; implementation that fosters active student engagement through real-world experiences and contexts; assessment designed to track the development of knowledge and skills; and reflection, which serves as a basis for improving future instruction. Consequently, the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach should not be viewed merely as a teaching method; instead, it must be understood as an approach whose success hinges on the teacher's ability to design, facilitate, evaluate, and reflect upon the learning process.

In the context of SMPN 1 Kertasemaya, utilizing the students' social environment as a learning resource allows for various phenomena such as economic activities, social interactions, social change, local culture, environmental conditions, and societal issues to serve as the context for social studies instruction. This integration has the potential to make learning more meaningful, as students are given the opportunity to connect the concepts they study with their own real-life experiences. Therefore, strengthening teacher competencies, systematic instructional planning, the use of contextual learning resources, assessment focused on processes and competencies, and a culture of reflection must become integral components of efforts to enhance the quality of social studies instruction.

This research asserts that the quality of contextual-based social studies instruction is determined not merely by the approach employed, but primarily by the teacher's ability to manage the entire learning process in an integrated manner. The synthesis of teacher competence and a contextual approach serves as a vital foundation for developing social studies instruction that is relevant to students' lives fostering active engagement while supporting the development of critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills, as well as an understanding of social reality. These findings imply that professional development for teachers should focus not only on the mastery of subject matter and instructional methods but also on the capacity to design contextual learning experiences, conduct meaningful assessments, and engage in continuous reflection.

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