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Diagnostic Analysis of Social Studies Learning Participation: The Gap Between Traditional Pedagogy and Deep Learning Readiness in Elementary Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to diagnose the critical deficit in student participation within Social Studies (IPS) learning and to evaluate the necessity of a pedagogical shift toward Problem Based Learning (PBL) integrated with Deep Learning. While traditional Social Studies instruction often emphasizes rote memorization, this research addresses the problem of student disengagement in rural primary education by profiling the gap between current teacher-centered practices and student readiness for innovative models. The research employs a descriptive mixed-methods approach to profile 23 Grade IV students at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari, Wonosobo. Data were collected through structured observations using a 10-indicator participation scale, a 12-item student perception questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews with the classroom teacher. Quantitative data were analyzed using percentage and mean formulas, while qualitative data underwent thematic reduction and triangulation to ensure validity. The results reveal a profound participation crisis, with an average classical participation rate of only 34.3 percent, placing the classroom in the "Poor" category. Specific indicators such as asking critical questions and responding to peer work scored as low as 30 percent and 27 percent respectively. Conversely, the questionnaire results indicate a high student readiness for innovation, with a score of 4.6 out of 5.0 for the desire to use interactive digital media and a 4.3 score for collaborative learning preferences. The study concludes that the current "culture of silence" is a direct result of outdated instructional designs rather than a lack of student potential. The findings provide a mandatory baseline for implementing a PBL-Deep Learning framework that prioritizes student agency and digital integration. Future research should focus on the longitudinal impact of this integrated model on the development of 21st-century social competencies in similar rural primary school settings.

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Introduction

The landscape of primary education in the 21st century is undergoing a tectonic shift, moving away from the traditional, passive acquisition of facts toward a dynamic model of competence-based learning (Kain et al., 2024). Central to this transformation is the role of Social Studies (IPS) in elementary schools. Social Studies is not merely an academic discipline; it is a vital laboratory for democracy and social cohesion, designed to equip young learners with the critical thinking skills, social awareness, and ethical grounding necessary to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world (İlter et al., 2025). Ideally, a Social Studies classroom should be a vibrant hub of inquiry where students engage with history, geography, economics, and sociology to understand their place in the world and their responsibility toward society (Hwang et al., 2025). However, a profound disconnect often exists between this pedagogical ideal and the stark reality of classroom practice, particularly in rural contexts where traditional methods still dominate the instructional narrative.

In many Indonesian elementary schools, Social Studies is frequently perceived by both teachers and students as a dry, memory-heavy endeavor (Werang et al., 2025). The prevailing instructional mode remains stubbornly teacher-centered, characterized by long periods of lecturing and a heavy reliance on textbooks (Zakharova et al., 2024). This "banking concept" of education, where the teacher acts as the sole depositor of knowledge and students as passive receptacles effectively stifles curiosity and kills engagement (Ulimaz et al., 2023). When students are positioned as objects of instruction rather than subjects of learning, their participation plunges (Hasanah Lubis et al., 2023). This lack of participation is not just a minor classroom management issue; it is a fundamental educational crisis that prevents the development of the very social competences the subject is intended to foster.

This research was born out of a critical observation of this pedagogical crisis at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari, Wonosobo. Preliminary investigations conducted in September 2025 revealed a deeply concerning pattern of disengagement among Grade IV students. Despite the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which explicitly calls for student-centered learning, the actual practice in the classroom remained trapped in traditional routines (Muna et al., 2024). Out of the 23 students observed, a significant majority exhibited passive behavior: they rarely questioned the material, hesitated to express opinions, and showed minimal enthusiasm for collaborative tasks. This observation served as the primary catalyst for this study. The gap between policy, the curriculum's goals and practice the reality at the school site represents a significant barrier to the quality of primary education in rural Indonesia.

To understand the gravity of this issue, one must first define what participation truly means in a modern educational context. Participation is the multi-dimensional involvement of students, physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially in the learning journey. It is the visible manifestation of a student's internal cognitive process (Morales, 2021). When a student asks a question, challenges a peer's idea, or proposes a solution to a social problem, they are not just "talking"; they are actively constructing knowledge. Educational theorists argue that participation is a prerequisite for learning; without it, information may be received, but it is rarely internalized or transformed into competence

(Al-Amin et al., 2021). This article positions participation as a dynamic process that must be intentionally engineered through innovative instructional design.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by exploring a relatively new frontier in primary pedagogy: the integration of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) with the principles of Deep Learning. While PBL has long been lauded for its ability to foster critical thinking by grounding learning in authentic problems, its implementation in elementary schools often lacks depth (Cong & Ironsi, 2025). Deep Learning, as a pedagogical framework, elevates PBL by emphasizing global competencies: character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking (Deng et al., 2024). It demands that students go beyond surface level solutions and engage in rigorous analysis and reflection (Natsiopoulou & Angelakeris, 2026). By merging these two konsep, we propose a more robust strategy for revitalizing Social Studies.

The importance of this topic is further underscored by the "digital paradox" facing modern schools. We live in an era where technology is ubiquitous, yet its use in the classroom often remains superficial limited to showing videos or using digital slides as a replacement for the chalkboard (Sulistiyowati et al., 2024). True Deep Learning requires technology to be used as a tool for inquiry, data analysis, and global connection (Feri et al., 2025). At SDN 02 Rejosari, the lack of digital integration was identified as a secondary barrier to participation. Students who are "digital natives" outside the school find the "analog" nature of the Social Studies classroom alienating and unstimulating. Therefore, researching how to bridge this digital divide through a PBL-Deep Learning framework is not just an academic exercise; it is a necessity for making school relevant again (Sentriyo et al., 2023).

There is a significant controversy regarding student engagement: is the primary barrier the teacher's outdated method, or is it a fundamental lack of basic social skills among students? Some argue that even with advanced models, students in rural areas lack the prerequisite "social capital" to participate effectively. However, this study refutes that position, suggesting that students' passivity is a rational response to an uninspiring environment. The main aim of this work is to provide a diagnostic blueprint to demonstrate that before a new model can be successfully implemented, a deep and honest analysis of the current state of classroom participation is required. This article serves as that diagnostic effort, concluding that the "silent classroom" is a loud call for innovation a pedagogy that values depth over breadth and student agency over teacher control.

Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed methods approach with a descriptive explanatory design, specifically utilized as a diagnostic preliminary study to profile student participation prior to the classroom intervention. Although the broader research framework is rooted in Classroom Action Research following the Kemmis and McTaggart model, this article focuses on the diagnostic phase to map the baseline participation levels of students. This phase is crucial to justify the necessity of integrating Problem Based Learning with Deep

Learning principles in the Social Studies curriculum. The research flowchart of diagnostic study can be seen in figure 1.

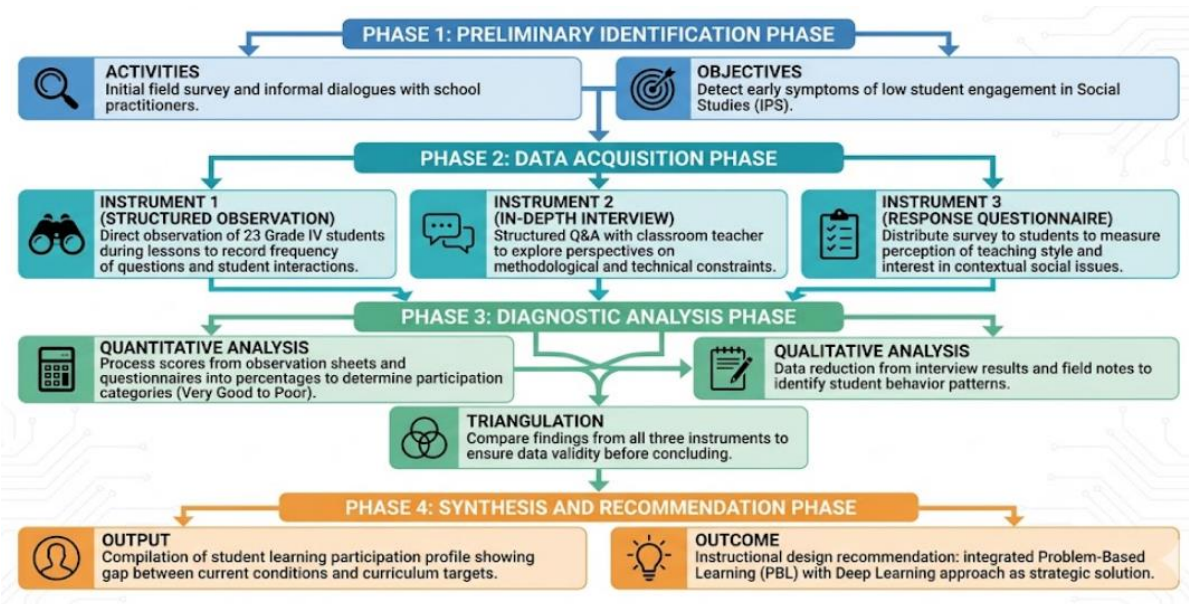


Figure 1: Research Flowchart of Diagnostic Study

2.2. Research Subjects and Informants

The subjects of this research are 4th grade students at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari, Wonosobo, for the 2025/2026 academic year. The total population consists of 23 students who were included in the study using a total sampling technique. In addition to the students, the 4th grade classroom teacher served as a key informant to provide critical data regarding historical participation patterns and classroom challenges. The researcher acted as a non participant observer to record authentic interactions during the Social Studies learning process.

2.3. Location and Duration

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari, located in the Wonosobo Regency, Central Java Province. The primary data point for this diagnostic profile was established through intensive observation and interviews conducted in September 2025.

2.4. Data Collection Techniques and Instrument Development

Data were gathered through three primary techniques which include structured observation, student questionnaires, and documentation.

- **Observation:** The primary instrument was a structured observation sheet containing ten specific indicators of participation. These indicators were designed to capture the multidimensional engagement of the 23 students, categorized as follows: (1) attention to teacher explanations to measure focal engagement; (2) active observation of social problems to assess contextual awareness; (3) ability to identify core issues to evaluate cognitive precision; (4) courage to ask critical questions to gauge inquisitive confidence; (5) cooperation within assigned groups to monitor social cohesion; (6) actively sharing ideas in groups to measure individual contribution; (7) ability to analyze data information to assess processing

skills; (8) participation in synthesizing solutions to evaluate collaborative problem solving; (9) skills in presenting group results to measure communicative competence; and (10) responding to other groups work to assess critical peer engagement

- Questionnaire: A response questionnaire consisting of 12 statements was developed using a 5 point Likert scale to capture students perceptions and interests toward Social Studies.
- Documentation: This included classroom photographs, teacher lesson plans, and student work samples used to validate the findings from observations.

2.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative thematic analysis. To determine the percentage of student participation from the observation and questionnaire results, the following formula was applied:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Obtained Score}}{\text{Maximum Score}} \times 100\%$$

Furthermore, to determine the average participation level of the class, the mean formula was used:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

In these equations, $\bar{x}$ represents the mean score, $\sum x$ is the total sum of scores, and N is the number of subjects. The resulting percentages were then categorized into five levels of interpretation which are Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor, and Very Poor. Qualitative data from interviews and field notes underwent a systematic process of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing to explain the factors influencing the quantitative results.

Result

The results of this diagnostic study are categorized into three major thematic findings which include the quantitative baseline of student participation, the analysis of student psychological readiness and perceptions, and the qualitative mapping of existing instructional barriers. These findings provide a comprehensive empirical map of the 23 students in Grade IV at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari.

3.1. Quantitative Profile of Baseline Participation

The core of the quantitative findings is derived from structured observations conducted during Social Studies sessions. The evaluation focused on how students interact with social problems and economic themes within the classroom environment. Based on the percentage formula defined in the methodology, the data shows that student involvement is critically below the minimum criteria for success. Table 1 provides a detailed distribution of scores across ten essential participation indicators.

Table 1. Detailed Distribution of Student Participation Indicators

No	Participation Indicator	Average Score (1-4)	Percentage (%)	Category
1	Attention to teacher explanations	1.8	45%	Poor
2	Active observation of social problems	1.6	40%	Poor
3	Ability to identify core issues	1.4	35%	Poor
4	Courage to ask critical questions	1.2	30%	Very Poor
5	Cooperation within assigned groups	1.5	37%	Poor
6	Actively sharing ideas in groups	1.3	32%	Poor
7	Ability to analyze data information	1.4	35%	Poor
8	Participation in synthesizing solutions	1.2	30%	Very Poor
9	Skills in presenting group results	1.3	32%	Poor
10	Responding to other groups work	1.1	27%	Very Poor
Total	Average Class Participation	1.38	34.3%	Poor

The quantitative data in Table 1 reflects a classroom culture of passivity. The highest score, recorded for attention to explanations at 45 percent, indicates that while students are physically present, they are merely receptive rather than active participants. The alarming deficit in responding to peer work at 27 percent and asking critical questions at 30 percent highlights a significant lack of communicative competence and critical thinking skills. This numerical evidence suggests that the current instructional climate at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari is heavily oriented toward surface learning where students are not encouraged to challenge or analyze the information provided by the teacher. A visual representation of the substantial gap between the current 34.3 percent average student participation and the expected 75 percent benchmark can be seen in Figure 2.

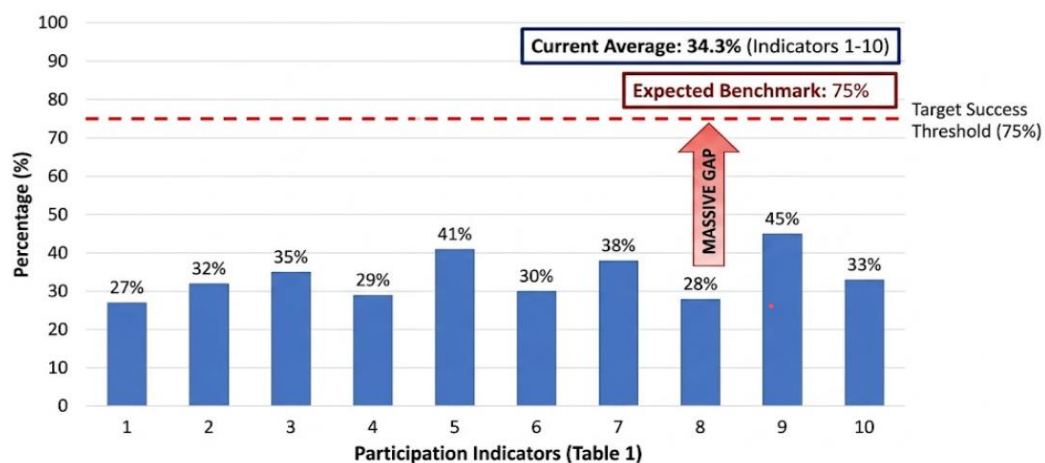


Figure 2: Comparative Bar Chart of Participation Indicators

3.2. Student Perceptions and Readiness for Deep Learning

To understand the psychological factors behind the low participation scores, a questionnaire was administered to the 23 students. This was intended to capture their readiness for the proposed Deep Learning model. The data indicates a significant desire

for change in instructional methods despite the low participation observed during the classroom sessions.

Table 2. Analysis of Student Response Toward Social Studies Learning

Variable measured from questionnaire	Average Likert Score (1-5)	Interpretation
General interest in Social Studies topics	3.2	Neutral
Perceived difficulty of learning material	3.8	High Difficulty
Desire for interactive digital technology	4.6	Very High
Anxiety regarding asking questions	4.1	High Anxiety
Preference for collaborative problem solving	4.3	High Preference

Table 2 reveals a paradox where students have a high preference for collaborative problem solving at a score of 4.3 but simultaneously experience high anxiety regarding asking questions at a score of 4.1. This suggests that the low participation is not due to a lack of interest but rather a rigid classroom structure that does not provide a safe space for inquiry. The overwhelming demand for interactive digital technology at a score of 4.6 indicates that the students are ready for the technology integrated approach of Deep Learning. The percentage of students who prefer digital video and simulations over text heavy books can be seen in figure 3.

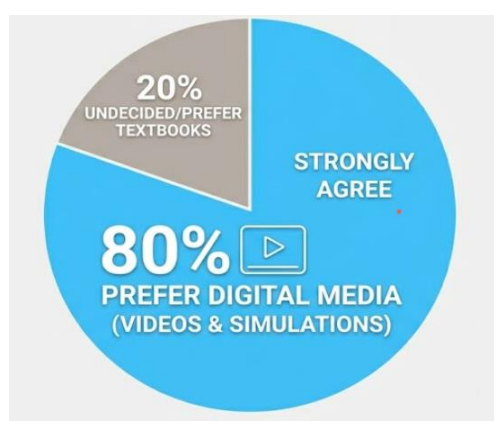


Figure 3: Pie Chart of Digital Media Preference

3.3. Qualitative Mapping of Instructional Barriers

Qualitative evidence from teacher interviews and direct classroom documentation conducted in September 2025 provided a deeper context to the quantitative low scores. Several critical barriers were identified through thematic analysis. First, the teacher centered dominance was evident as the instructor occupied the vast majority of the instructional time for lecturing. This left very little room for student agency or independent thought. Second, the material was presented in an abstract manner which was disconnected from the daily lives of the students in the Wonosobo region. This lack of context made the students view Social Studies as a subject meant only for rote memorization.

Furthermore, documentation through field notes showed that during the limited group activity sessions, students did not know how to collaborate effectively. Most students were

waiting for explicit instructions rather than investigating the social problem presented to them. This observation explains the low scores in Table 1 for cooperation at 37 percent and sharing ideas at 32 percent. The qualitative data confirms that the instructional design currently in use does not align with the principles of the Kurikulum Merdeka or the requirements for 21st century skills development.

In conclusion, the results of this diagnostic study illustrate a profound need for pedagogical transformation at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari. The average participation rate of 34.3 percent as shown in Table 1 paired with a high desire for innovative digital and problem based methods in Table 2 creates a strong empirical foundation for the proposed research intervention. The current state of learning is characterized by surface memorization and a culture of silence which can only be addressed by an instructional model that prioritizes deep conceptual understanding and active student participation.

Discussion

The diagnostic findings at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari reveal a critical participation deficit that necessitates a fundamental shift in instructional paradigm. The average participation rate of 34.3 percent identified in the results section is not merely a statistical figure but a reflection of a systemic pedagogical failure. This discussion explores the underlying causes of this disengagement and analyzes how the proposed integration of Problem Based Learning and Deep Learning can address these challenges.

4. 1. The Anatomy of Passive Learning and the Culture of Silence

The low scores in participation indicators, particularly in questioning and peer interaction, point toward a deep-seated culture of silence. In many traditional Indonesian classrooms, Social Studies is often taught through a didactic approach where the teacher acts as the primary source of authority (Taş, 2022). This environment creates a psychological barrier for students, where asking a question is perceived as a sign of weakness or a lack of intelligence rather than an essential component of the inquiry process. The high anxiety score regarding asking questions found in the student questionnaires suggests that students feel socially and intellectually vulnerable in a teacher-centered setting (Shang & Ma, 2024).

When students are relegated to the role of passive listeners, they develop a surface learning orientation. This orientation prioritizes the memorization of facts over the understanding of concepts. In the context of the 23 students in Grade IV, this is evident in their inability to identify core social issues or synthesize solutions. Without the opportunity to engage in critical dialogue, students fail to develop the cognitive structures necessary for high order thinking. The diagnostic data proves that the "banking model" of education is still prevalent, effectively hindering the development of the social competences required by the modern curriculum.

4. 2. Bridging the Motivation-Method Gap through Problem Based Learning

One of the most striking findings of this study is the gap between students' inherent interest in collaborative work and their actual performance in the classroom. While students expressed a high preference for working together, their observed cooperation scores were low. This discrepancy indicates that students possess the desire to participate but lack the structured environment to do so effectively (Hu et al., 2024). Problem Based Learning offers a solution to this gap by providing a framework where students must rely on each other to solve authentic problems.

By shifting the starting point of learning from a teacher's lecture to a real-world problem, PBL transforms the classroom dynamic. Students are no longer waiting for information; they are actively seeking it to address a specific challenge. This model aligns with the principles of constructivism, where knowledge is built through social interaction and personal exploration. In the proposed intervention for SDN 02 Rejosari, PBL will serve as the vehicle for student agency, allowing the 23 students to take ownership of their learning process and move away from the passive reception of information.

4. 3. Deep Learning as a Catalyst for Instructional Depth

While PBL provides the structure, Deep Learning provides the depth (Zhou et al., 2022). The diagnostic study found that even when group work was assigned, it often lacked rigorous analysis. Deep Learning addresses this by focusing on six global competencies which include character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. It encourages students to look beyond the immediate answers and explore the deeper implications of social phenomena (Salam et al., 2024).

The integration of Deep Learning principles ensures that the 23 students are not just "doing" PBL but are engaging in a process of transformation. This involves reflecting on their own thinking processes and connecting classroom lessons with their identities as citizens. For students in a rural area like Wonosobo, Deep Learning can make Social Studies highly relevant by using local social issues as the primary curriculum content. This contextualization is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and social responsibility, which are core goals of the Social Studies subject.

4. 4. Harnessing Digital Readiness for Pedagogical Innovation

The overwhelming demand for interactive digital technology identified in the student responses presents a significant opportunity for innovation. At SDN 02 Rejosari, the current lack of digital integration has created a "relevance gap" for students who are increasingly exposed to digital content outside of school. Deep Learning leverages this digital readiness by using technology as a tool for inquiry rather than just a medium for presentation.

In the proposed model, digital tools will be used to provide students with diverse data sources, interactive simulations, and platforms for collaboration. This technology integrated approach can lower the barriers to participation (Adler et al., 2025). For instance, students who feel anxious about speaking in front of the class may find it easier to contribute their ideas through digital discussion boards or collaborative documents. By

meeting students where they are digitally, the school can transform Social Studies from an "analog" chore into a "digital" exploration of the world.

4. 5. *Refuting the Barrier of Social Capital in Rural Education*

A common controversy in educational discourse is the belief that students in rural areas lack the necessary social capital to engage in complex instructional models. Some argue that because these students come from less privileged backgrounds, they are inherently less capable of participating in high order thinking activities. However, the findings of this study refute this deterministic view. The high scores for preference in collaborative problem solving and digital readiness among the 23 students demonstrate that the potential for high level engagement is present; it is simply being suppressed by an uninspiring instructional design.

The barrier to participation at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari is not the students' lack of ability, but the school's lack of instructional innovation. When provided with the right tools and a supportive environment, rural students are just as capable of critical thinking and global citizenship as their urban counterparts (Moloi & Dlomo, 2024). Therefore, the implementation of PBL based on Deep Learning is not just an instructional choice; it is an act of pedagogical justice that provides all students with the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

4. 6. *Principal Conclusions and Future Implications*

The primary conclusion of this diagnostic study is that the current participation crisis at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari is a loud call for immediate intervention. The average participation rate of 34.3 percent is a baseline that can only be improved through a radical shift toward student-centered, deep, and technology integrated learning. The diagnostic data provides a clear roadmap for the next phase of research, which will involve the actual implementation of the PBL-Deep Learning model.

By identifying the specific psychological and instructional barriers to participation, this study has laid the groundwork for a more effective and targeted intervention. The findings suggest that the 23 students are not just ready for change; they are actively demanding it. The successful transformation of this Social Studies classroom will serve as a model for other rural schools in the region, proving that deep learning is possible even in the most challenging environments. The future of primary education lies in our ability to value depth over breadth and to empower students to become active participants in their own education.

Conclusion

The diagnostic analysis conducted at SD Negeri 02 Rejosari confirms that student participation in Social Studies is currently in a state of critical stagnation. The main state of play at the time of writing reveals a significant disparity between the active learning goals of the national curriculum and the reality of classroom practice. With an average participation rate of only 34.3 percent, the 23 students in Grade IV are trapped in a passive learning cycle where teacher dominance and a lack of contextual engagement have silenced their natural curiosity. This study concludes that the primary barrier to

participation is not a lack of student ability but rather an instructional design that fails to connect academic concepts with the students' digital readiness and their preference for collaborative problem solving.

The main argument restated through this research is that revitalizing Social Studies requires more than just minor adjustments to teaching methods; it demands a radical pedagogical reconstruction. The findings prove that students possess a high latent interest in interactive and problem based environments, yet the current analog and teacher centered approach acts as a deterrent to engagement. The integration of Problem Based Learning and Deep Learning is no longer just an innovative option but a necessity to bridge the gap between surface memorization and deep conceptual understanding. By placing students as the protagonists of their own learning journey, the proposed framework transforms the classroom from a space of information delivery into a center of inquiry and social analysis.

In terms of practical application, the findings of this study provide a clear framework for educators to implement a two pronged strategy. First, teachers must shift their role from lecturers to facilitators who design authentic, local based problems that require collective investigation. Second, the integration of digital media and interactive technology must be prioritized to cater to the students' digital native identities, thereby lowering the psychological barriers to participation. This framework can be applied by primary school teachers across rural and urban settings to create a more inclusive and dynamic Social Studies environment that fosters 21st century competencies.

The implications for further research are significant. This diagnostic study serves as a foundational baseline for the next phase of experimental or action based research. Future studies should focus on the long term impact of the PBL Deep Learning model on student learning outcomes and character development. Additionally, further research is needed to explore how technology can be used more effectively in resource constrained rural schools to support deep learning without sacrificing local cultural values. Ultimately, this research emphasizes that understanding the profile of student participation is the first critical step toward creating a primary education system that values depth, agency, and meaningful social engagement.

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