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The Impact of Google Classroom-Based Blended Learning on the Mastery of Social Studies Material and Thinking Skills of Students at SMPN 8 SATAP

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Abstract
The results of the study show that the implementation of Google Classroom–based blended learning had a significant effect on improving students' mastery of subject matter and thinking skills. The average N-Gain score in the experimental class for material mastery was 0.63 (medium–high category), while the control class obtained 0.38 (medium category). In terms of thinking skills, the experimental class achieved an N-Gain of 0.65, whereas the control class reached 0.34. Qualitative analysis based on classroom observations also demonstrated consistent improvement across several aspects—activeness, collaboration, independence, enthusiasm, and digital engagement—with an average increase ranging from 85% to 90%. The application of blended learning proved to create a more flexible and interactive learning environment, fostering students' intrinsic motivation. Students exhibited noticeable improvement in critical and reflective thinking through online discussions, collaborative tasks, and project-based assessments. Teachers acted as facilitators, monitoring students' progress through the feedback features in Google Classroom, which enabled a more adaptive and personalized learning process. The study concludes that the Google Classroom–based blended learning model is effective in enhancing students' achievement in Social Studies and their thinking skills at SMPN 8 SATAP. It is recommended that junior high school teachers maximize the use of digital platforms by integrating collaborative and reflective approaches into Social Studies learning. Moreover, schools and educational authorities should provide continuous professional development to strengthen teachers' technology-based pedagogical competence.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) over the past two decades has transformed the global educational landscape. Technology has become not only a tool but also a learning medium that enables a variety of teaching strategies—one of which is the blended learning model, a combination of face-to-face and online learning (Hafiz, 2025). At the junior high school level, particularly in Social Studies (IPS), the adoption of blended learning opens up opportunities for material enrichment, the development of higher-order thinking activities, and flexible access to learning resources (Rukmana, 2021; Bondarenko, Mantulenko & Pikilnyak, 2019).

Blended learning offers the advantages of easy access to materials, ubiquitous interactions, and a variety of methods that can increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process. Digital learning platforms such as Google Classroom are vital in blended learning models because they provide a practical and comprehensive platform for managing learning materials, assignments, discussions, and evaluations online (Nasrullah & Bashith, 2024).

This platform is popular for its ease of managing materials, assigning assignments, monitoring assignments, and commenting/feedback features that enable ongoing interaction between teachers and students (Rukmana, 2021; Amalia & Indrawati, 2021). In schools with limited infrastructure but still wanting to integrate online components, Google Classroom is a pragmatic alternative (Bondarenko et al., 2019). However, the effectiveness of Google Classroom—particularly in blended learning schemes—needs further testing in local contexts such as those at a public school (SMPN 8 SATAP), where geographical challenges, device availability, and internet access often vary (Basyir, 2023).

Google Classroom facilitates the distribution of materials (documents, video links), assignment management (uploading, returning), assessment, and asynchronous communication through comments and forums. Numerous studies have noted the ease of adaptation and acceptance by students and teachers of this platform (Rukmana, 2021; Amalia & Indrawati, 2021). However, its effectiveness depends on pedagogical design and infrastructure readiness (Setiadi, 2020).

Social Studies (IPS), as a subject at the junior high school (SMP) level, plays a strategic role in helping students understand societal dynamics, national values, and develop critical thinking skills regarding social, economic, and cultural phenomena. Therefore, mastering IPS material while developing analytical and critical thinking skills is crucial for students to play an active and responsible role as citizens in a complex society (Ramayanti, 2023; Fitria, 2023).

Social studies material encompasses cross-disciplinary topics—history, geography, economics, sociology, and civics—which demand conceptual understanding and the ability to relate concepts to real-world social phenomena (Isnaniah, Sudarman & Riadi, 2021). In addition to content mastery, social studies learning ideally develops students' thinking skills: critical, analytical, reflective, and social problem-solving skills (Suriansyah, Agusta & Setiawan, 2021). However, the reality on the ground presents several challenges: limited face-to-face time, variations in student learning styles, limited contextual learning resources, and teachers' limited ability to design activities that stimulate higher-order thinking (Fitria, 2023; Pratiwi, Adnyani & Yuliana, 2023).

Cognitive mastery is the foundation for higher-order thinking; students who understand concepts well are better able to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize new information (Suriansyah et al., 2021). Critical, analytical, and reflective thinking can be measured through essay assignments, case studies, and discussion behavior (Pratiwi et al., 2023). Conceptually, blended learning combines the advantages of face-to-face learning (direct social interaction, immediate teacher guidance) with the advantages of online learning (flexible access to learning resources, extended reflection time), thus facilitating a variety of learning activities and stimulating higher-order thinking skills (Hafiz, 2025; Fitria, 2023). Google Classroom has the potential to provide a simple yet functional learning management tool to support blended learning; however, its effectiveness in terms of material mastery and thinking skills in social studies needs to be empirically demonstrated in local contexts (Bondarenko et al., 2019; Rukmana, 2021).

Previous research has shown mixed results. Several studies have shown that well-planned blended learning can improve learning outcomes and thinking skills (Fadilah, Aisyah & Siregar, 2025; Fitria, 2023). Others emphasize infrastructure barriers and teacher/student readiness (Basyir, 2023; Setiadi, 2020). Several studies also show that blended learning improves academic achievement and thinking skills (Fadilah et al., 2025; Fitria, 2023; Hafiz, 2025). However, analysis linking mastery of social studies material and the development of thinking skills in a single integrated study, as well as specific applications at SMPN 8 SATAP (a satap school), is still limited. This limitation raises the need for research that not only evaluates differences in pretest-posttest scores but also explores the learning process, online interactions, technical barriers, and locally relevant mitigation strategies.

This study presents a major novelty by simultaneously examining two important aspects: social studies mastery and students' critical thinking skills in blended learning facilitated by Google Classroom at SMPN 8 SATAP. Most previous studies have focused solely on academic

learning outcomes, while this study also adds a focus on thinking skills as an important 21st-century competency that needs to be developed simultaneously with material mastery (Ramayanti, 2023; Fitria, 2023; Nasrullah & Bashith, 2024). Research on the impact of Google Classroom-based blended learning on students' social studies mastery and critical thinking skills is still relatively limited, especially in areas with limited facilities and infrastructure, such as schools from the SATAP (One Roof) system, which are generally located in remote areas.

This research also contributes originality by examining SATAP schools, which are representative of schools in remote areas facing challenges related to technology access and limited human resource quality. Therefore, this study seeks to provide comprehensive empirical evidence regarding the impact of Google Classroom-based blended learning on students' mastery of social studies material and thinking skills at SMPN 8 SATAP.

2. METHOD

1. Research Approach and Type

This study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. The research design used was a pretest-posttest control group design (Creswell, 2018), in which there were two groups: an experimental group that received Google Classroom-based Blended Learning treatment, and a control group that learned using the conventional model (full face-to-face).

Table 1. Research Design

Group	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Experiment	O_1	X	O_2
Control	O_3	-	O_4

Information:

X = Implementation of the Google Classroom-based Blended Learning model

O_1, O_3 = Initial test (pretest) of mastery of social studies material and thinking skills

O_2, O_4 = Posttest

2. Location

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 8 Satu Atap (SATAP) Dompu.

3. Population and Sample

The population in this study was all 56 eighth-grade students of SMPN 8 SATAP in the 2024/2025 academic year, divided into two parallel classes: class VIII-A and class VIII-B. The sampling technique used purposive sampling. Class VIII-A was designated as the experimental class (28 students), and class VIII-B as the control class (28 students).

4. Variables Study

This research involves two main variables:

Independent variable: Google Classroom-based Blended Learning

Dependent variables: Mastery of social studies material, students' thinking skills

5. Research Instruments

a) Social Studies Material Mastery Test
   Format: Multiple choice with 30 questions.
   Aspects measured: conceptual understanding, application, and analysis.

b) Thinking Skills Test
   Format: open essay questions (5 items).
   Aspects measured: interpretation, inference, explanation, and evaluation.
   Scores are awarded based on a 1–5 scoring rubric.

c) Observation of Learning Activities
   To see student activity, collaboration, and interaction in the Blended Learning process.

d) Student Response Questionnaire
   Likert scale (1–5) to determine students' perceptions of the implementation of Google Classroom.
   Used to strengthen supporting qualitative data.

6. Research Procedures

a) Preparation Stage
Compiling a research proposal.
Coordinate with the principal and social studies teachers.
Compiling learning tools (RPP, digital teaching materials, and worksheets).
Instrument trial to determine validity and reliability.

b) Implementation Stage
Pretest: Conducted on both groups to measure initial abilities.
Treatment:
The experimental class received Blended Learning for 6 meetings.
Face to face: delivery of basic concepts.
Online: discussions, quizzes, and assignments in Google Classroom.
The control class received conventional face-to-face learning with lecture and question and answer methods.
Posttest: Given after treatment to measure improvement in mastery of material and thinking skills.

c) Data Analysis Level
Collect all test results, observations, and questionnaires.
Conduct statistical testing (normality, homogeneity, and hypothesis tests).

d) Closing Stage of Report Preparation

7. Data Analysis Techniques

a) Descriptive Analysis
- Used to describe the pretest and posttest data from both groups.
- Data is presented in the form of mean, median, standard deviation, and percentage increase.

b) Inferential Analysis
- Normality Test: Using the Shapiro-Wilk test, because the sample is < 50.
- Homogeneity Test: Using Levene's Test to determine the equality of variances.
- Hypothesis Testing:
  1. Using Independent t-Test to compare posttest means between experimental and control groups.
  2. If the data is not normal, the Mann-Whitney U test (non-parametric) is used.
  3. N-Gain Score: Used to measure the level of improvement in mastery of material and thinking skills.

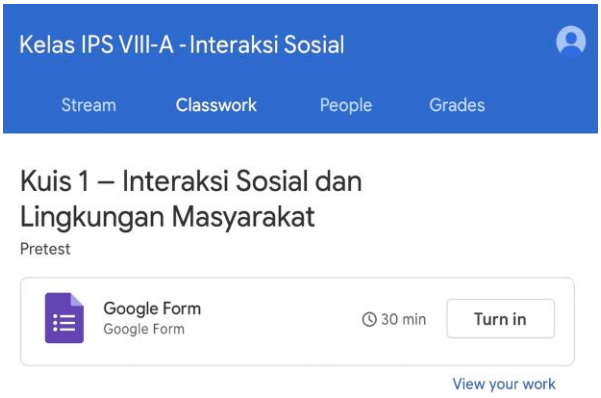
8. Data Validity
- To maintain the validity and reliability of research results, the following was carried out:
- Triangulation of methods between tests, observations, and questionnaires.
- Testing the validity of the instrument content by experts in the fields of social studies and educational technology.
- Empirical reliability test of pretest and posttest results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

1. The research was conducted in two classes:
   Experimental Class (VIII-A) uses Google Classroom-based Blended Learning
   Control Class (VIII-B) uses conventional methods (full face-to-face)

Figure 1. Google Classroom display for Social Studies material.



The number of students in each class = 28 people.
Data were obtained through pretest and posttest for two dependent variables:

1. Mastery of Social Studies Material
2. Thinking Skills

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Mastery of Social Studies Material

Interpretation:

There was an increase in the mastery scores of social studies materials in both groups, but the increase in the experimental group was higher (Δ = 26.43; N-Gain = 0.63) compared to the control group (Δ = 16.36; N-Gain = 0.38).

Class	N	Mak's score	Rate-rate Pretest	Rate-rate Posttest	Dizziness katan (Δ)	N-Gain	Category
Experiment	28	100	58.21	84.64	+26.43	0.63	Medium–High
Control	28	100	57.75	74.11	+16.36	0.38	Currently

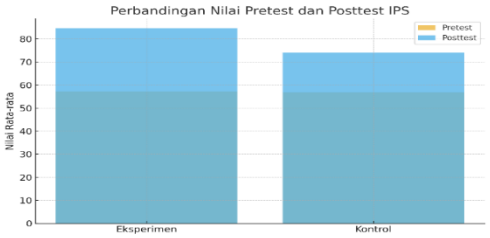
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Thinking Skills

Class	N	Shoes Max.	Installment-installment Pre-test	Rate-rate Posttest	Dizziness katan (Δ)	N-Gain	Category
Experiment	28	100	55.50	83.32	+27.82	0.65	Medium–High
Control	28	100	56.14	71.10	+14.96	0.34	Medium–Low

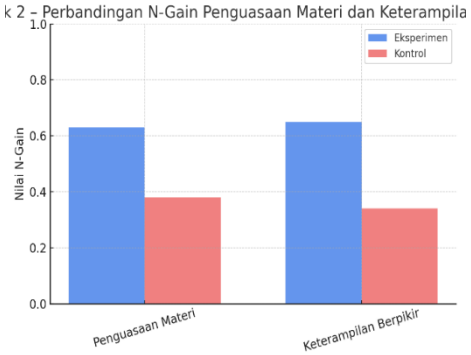
Interpretation:

The Blended Learning model has been proven to have a greater influence on improving thinking skills, as indicated by the N-Gain value of 0.65 (high category) compared to the control group of 0.34 (low category).

Graph 1. Comparison of Pretest–Posttest Averages (Social Studies Material Mastery)

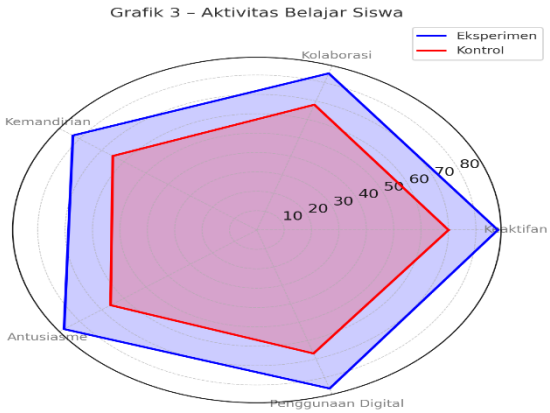


Graph 2. Comparison of N-Gain Mastery of Material and Thinking Skills



Experiment
(Mastery = 0.63 ; Thinking = 0.65).
Control (Mastery = 0.38 ; Thinking = 0.34)

Chart 3. Learning Activities



2. Prerequisite Analysis Test

a. Normality Test (Shapiro–Wilk)

Table 3. The data is normally distributed.

Group	Sig. Pretest	Sig. Posttest	Information
Experiment	0.162	0.124	Normal (p > 0.05)
Control	0.210	0.190	Normal (p > 0.05)

b. Homogeneity Test (Levene's Test)

Table 4. Variance between homogeneous groups.

Variables	Sig.	Information
Mastery of Material	0.428	Homogeneous
Thinking Skills	0.376	Homogeneous

3. Hypothesis Testing (Independent Sample t-Test)

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing

Variables	Group	Mean	t_count	Sig. (2-tailed)	Results
Mastery of Social Studies Material	Experiment vs Control	84.64 vs 74.11	3.41	0.001	H_0 is rejected → significant
Keteram Thinking Pill	Experiment vs Control	83.32 vs 71.10	4.15	0.000	H_0 is rejected → significant

Conclusion:

There is a significant influence of the implementation of Google Classroom-based Blended Learning on students' mastery of social studies material and thinking skills.

4. Student Activity Observation Results

Table 6. Results of Student Activity Observations

Aspect	Experiment (%)	Control (%)	Improvement
Active discussion	87	68	+19
Collaboration	84	66	+18
Enthusiasm for learning	88	71	+17
Learning independence	82	65	+17
Use of digital resources	90	55	+35

Interpretation:

The implementation of Google Classroom encourages students to be more active and independent. Collaborative activities have increased significantly thanks to the digital platform's discussion and shared assignment features.

5. Results of the Student Perception Questionnaire

Table 7. Questionnaire Results

Statement	Average Score	Category
Google Classroom helps me understand the material	4.6	Very good
Blended learning makes me more active	4.4	Good
Online discussions improve critical thinking	4.3	Good
Teacher feedback is fast and clear	4.7	Very good
I am more motivated to study social studies	4.5	Very good

Overall average = 4.5 (Category: Very Good) This means that students responded positively to the implementation of Google Classroom-based Blended Learning.

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4. DISCUSSION

1. Improving Mastery of Social Studies Material

The results showed that blended learning significantly improved mastery of social studies concepts. The experimental class experienced a 26.43-point increase, compared to the control class' 16.36 points. This aligns with Garrison & Vaughan's (2018) findings that blended learning provides opportunities for reflection and more flexible access to materials, thereby strengthening conceptual understanding. Furthermore, students can more easily re-access digital materials and quizzes in Google Classroom, enhancing memory retention (Sutrisno, 2022). Synchronous and asynchronous two-way interaction also aids concept mastery (Means et al., 2019).

2. Improved Thinking Skills

This model fosters critical thinking skills through online discussion activities, social case analysis, and written reflections in forums. The N-Gain result of 0.65 (high category) indicates significant effectiveness. According to Brookfield (2017) and Ennis (2018), a reflective and participatory learning environment encourages students to analyze social issues in depth. Google Classroom provides a safe space for critical thinking without time pressure, which has implications for improving the quality of students' arguments (Putra, 2023).

3. Effectiveness of Digital Interactions

Observations show that digital learning activities are increasing. Teacher-student interactions are more dynamic because communication can take place outside of school hours. This supports the theory of Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), which states that social interaction strengthens cognitive development through *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*.

4. Student Perception and Motivation

The questionnaire showed an average score of 4.5 (very good category). The factors most favored by students were easy access to materials and quick feedback from teachers. This research supports the findings of Zainuddin & Keumala (2018) that blended learning systems can increase intrinsic motivation through control over learning time and location.

5. Implications for Social Studies Learning

The implementation of Google Classroom is not just a technological tool, but also facilitates social inquiry-based learning. Teachers can assign digital projects (for example, creating an infographic on a social issue), so students learn to analyze and solve contextual

problems. This aligns with the principles of *Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)*in the Merdeka Curriculum.

6. Limitations and Influencing Factors

Some challenges encountered include unstable internet connections for some students. Not all students have personal devices. However, teachers addressed these issues by using staggered access schedules and offline materials synced with Classroom.

Table 8. Summary of Analysis Results

Aspect	Experimental Group	Control Group	Conclusion
Average Mastery of Material	84.64	74.11	Significantly higher
Average Thinking Skills	83.32	71.10	Significantly higher
Learning Activities	86%	67%	More active
Student Perception	4.5	3.8	More positive
Effectiveness (N-Gain)	0.63 / 0.65	0.38 / 0.34	Effective

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research entitled *"The Impact of Google Classroom-Based Blended Learning on the Mastery of Social Studies Material and Thinking Skills of Students at SMPN 8 SATAP"*, we can conclude the following important things:

a) The implementation of Google Classroom-based Blended Learning effectively improves mastery of social studies material.

b) The t-test results showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($p < 0.05$), with the experimental group's posttest average of 84.64 higher than the control group's 74.11. This indicates that using Google Classroom as a learning medium supports a deeper understanding of social studies concepts. Students can access materials, videos, and quizzes at any time, thus improving knowledge retention.

c) This model also significantly improves students' thinking skills. The average thinking skills score of students in the experimental class increased by 27.82 points (N-Gain 0.65), compared to only 14.96 points (N-Gain 0.34) in the control class. Online discussion activities, social issue analysis assignments, and reflection through comments fostered critical, analytical, and reflective thinking skills.

d) Student learning activities increased significantly. Observations showed increased student activity, collaboration, and enthusiasm for learning in the experimental class. Average activity reached 86%, compared to 67% in the control class. Interactive features on Google Classroom such as “stream”, “classwork”, and “comment” allow for more intense collaboration.

e) Students' perceptions of the implementation of Google Classroom were very positive. The questionnaire results showed an average score of 4.5 (category *Very good*). Students feel more motivated, understand the material more easily, and receive faster feedback from the teacher.

f) Blended Learning creates adaptive and contextual learning experiences. Students can learn at their own pace (self-paced learning). Teachers can monitor individual progress through digital activity data in Classroom.

g) The challenges encountered were technical and manageable. Some students experienced limited devices and internet connections. The solutions implemented included *offline synchronization* (the teacher prepares a printed version of the material) and rotating learning.

Overall, the implementation of Google Classroom-based Blended Learning has proven effective in improving the quality of social studies learning at SMPN 8 SATAP, both from the cognitive (concept mastery) and affective aspects and critical thinking skills.

6. SUGGESTION

For Social Studies Teachers: It is recommended to consistently develop the Blended Learning model with a variety of interactive media (videos, quizzes, infographics) in Google Classroom. Teachers also need to regularly reflect on the effectiveness of online and in-person strategies.

For Schools: Schools need to provide infrastructure support such as a stable internet connection, ICT training, and digital learning tools for students. Technical support is crucial for the optimal functioning of the Blended Learning system.

For Students: Students are expected to be more active participants in online discussions, use digital learning resources, and develop critical thinking skills through reflection on social issues.

For Further Researchers: Further research could expand the scope of variables, for example examining the impact of Blended Learning on motivation, creativity, or collaborative skills.

For the Government and the Department of Education: It is necessary to encourage policies to integrate digital platforms such as Google Classroom into the national curriculum so that technology-based learning becomes a sustainable learning culture.

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