
Social Studies Learning Innovation Through The Utilization of The Powtoon Application as Educational Animation

Ersis Warmansyah Abbas

ersiswa@ulm.ac.id

Social Studies Education Department, FKIP Lambung Mangkurat University

Fatwa Nur'aini

fatwa.nuraini@ulm.ac.id

Social Studies Education Department, FKIP Lambung Mangkurat University

Jumriani

jumriani@ulm.ac.id

Social Studies Education Department, FKIP Lambung Mangkurat University

M. Ridha Ilhami

ridhailhami@gmail.com

Social Studies Education Department, FKIP Lambung Mangkurat University

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Abstract

The development of digital technology in the world of education requires teachers to present learning that is more creative, interactive, and in accordance with the character of 21st century students. Educational animation is one of the important media alternatives because it is able to increase students' attention, motivation, and understanding of subject matter. Based on these needs, this service activity was carried out with the aim of improving the competence of social studies teachers in utilizing the Powtoon application as an educational animation medium in learning. The method used is a participatory approach through three main stages, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning stage, the team compiled training modules and prepared digital learning support facilities. The implementation stage is carried out through training activities and assistance in the practice of making animation media with the Powtoon application. Meanwhile, the evaluation stage was carried out to assess the learning media products produced by teachers and collect feedback from the trainees. The results of the activity showed that social studies teachers participating in MGMP Banjarbaru City were able to produce animation-based learning media that was innovative, interesting, and relevant to the needs of students. Thus, this activity is expected to encourage the improvement of the quality of social studies learning through the application of creative and educational digital media.

Keywords: educational animation, social studies learning, Powtoon

Abstrak

Perkembangan teknologi digital dalam dunia pendidikan menuntut guru untuk menghadirkan pembelajaran yang lebih kreatif, interaktif, dan sesuai dengan karakter peserta didik abad 21. Animasi edukatif menjadi salah satu alternatif media yang penting karena mampu meningkatkan perhatian, motivasi, serta pemahaman peserta didik terhadap materi pelajaran. Berdasarkan kebutuhan tersebut, kegiatan pengabdian ini dilaksanakan dengan tujuan meningkatkan kompetensi guru IPS dalam memanfaatkan aplikasi Powtoon sebagai media animasi edukatif dalam pembelajaran. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan partisipatif melalui tiga tahapan utama, yaitu perencanaan, implementasi, dan evaluasi. Pada tahap perencanaan, tim menyusun modul pelatihan serta menyiapkan sarana pendukung pembelajaran digital. Tahap implementasi dilakukan melalui kegiatan pelatihan dan pendampingan praktik pembuatan media animasi dengan aplikasi Powtoon. Sementara itu, tahap evaluasi dilaksanakan untuk menilai produk media pembelajaran yang dihasilkan guru serta mengumpulkan umpan balik dari peserta pelatihan. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa guru IPS peserta MGMP Kota Banjarbaru mampu menghasilkan media pembelajaran berbasis animasi yang inovatif, menarik, dan relevan dengan kebutuhan peserta didik. Dengan demikian, kegiatan ini

diharapkan dapat mendorong peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran IPS melalui penerapan media digital yang kreatif dan edukatif.

Kata Kunci: animasi edukatif, pembelajaran IPS, Powtoon

Preliminary

The development of information and communication technology in the current digital era has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including in the world of education. The advancement of the use of the internet, mobile devices, online learning platforms, and multimedia applications has created new opportunities and demands for teaching practices (Siregar et al., 2025). The learning process that was previously conventional is now required to be more innovative, interactive, and interesting in order to be able to adapt to the characteristics of millennial and generation Z students. One of the main challenges faced by teachers, especially Social Sciences (IPS) teachers, is how to present complex and abstract learning materials to be more concrete and easy to understand by students. Teachers are required to be able to take advantage of various technological innovations in the learning process, one of which is through the use of creative and interactive digital media. The use of digital media such as educational animations, interactive videos, and technology-based learning applications not only helps explain abstract social studies concepts, but can also increase students' motivation and involvement in learning activities. Thus, social studies learning can take place more meaningfully, fun, and relevant to the development of the times and the needs of the current digital generation.

This is in line with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum which emphasizes student-centered learning and provides space for teachers to innovate in creating a contextual, creative, and meaningful learning process. In the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are expected to be able to develop learning that not only emphasizes aspects of knowledge, but also on critical, collaborative, communicative, and creative thinking skills (Partono et al., 2021). Through the integration of digital technology in social studies learning, teachers can provide a more interactive and personalized learning experience, according to the interests, learning styles, and needs of students. Thus, the use of digital media is one of the important strategies to realize social studies learning that is in line with the principles and objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum. Along with that, millennial and generation Z students are known as digital natives who have different learning characteristics than previous generations (Chardonnens, 2025). They are more likely to use digital devices, are interested in visuals and interactivity, and want learning that is quickly accessible, relevant to real life, and collaborative (Darmawan et al., 2024). In the context of social studies learning subjects that include materials that are often

abstract, complex, and multidisciplinary, the forms of concepts such as social change, global dynamics, spatial, and Pendekatan PAR dipilih karena memungkinkan terjadinya perubahan praktik pembelajaran melalui proses partisipatif dan reflektif yang berkelanjutan citizenship become more concrete, easy to understand, and interesting for students (Pinilih et al., 2024).

A number of recent studies show that digital learning media such as inquiry-based interactive multimedia, animation media, augmented reality/AR can improve students' digital literacy, learning motivation, and conceptual understanding in social lessons and learning processes. However, it should be noted that despite having great potential, the use of technology still has various obstacles that need to be considered, such as uneven technological infrastructure, teachers' digital competence that is still not optimal, and the need for the right instructional design so that digital media is not only attractive but also effective in improving learning outcomes (Ramadhani et al., 2025). Furthermore, in a world that is increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence and multimodal learning environments, social studies teachers are required to not only use ICT passively, but also integrate innovative adaptive learning strategies, such as problem-based learning (PBL), online and offline collaborative learning called blended, to the use of digital simulations so that students can think critically, creative, and collaborative in line with the demands of the 21st century (Jihanifa et al., 2025).

Social studies subjects as a subject that studies various social, economic, political, and cultural phenomena, require teachers' ability to connect theory with the reality of daily life. However, in practice, social studies learning is still often dominated by lecture methods and limited use of learning media, causing students to be less active and quickly feel bored (Dwi et al., 2022). Therefore, innovation is needed in learning strategies that can increase learning motivation while making it easier for students to understand social concepts in a fun way (Malone & Lepper, 2021). One form of learning innovation that can be applied is the use of the Powtoon application. Powtoon is a digital-based application that allows users to create educational animated videos easily and attractively (Kunci et al., 2024). Through Powtoon, teachers can develop learning media in the form of moving animations that combine text, images, sound, and visual effects to create a more interactive learning experience (Marini et al., 2023). The use of these educational animations not only helps students understand the material better, but also fosters interest, creativity, and active participation in the learning process (Hosaini et al., 2024).

SMP Negeri 1 Banjarbaru, one of the schools that is a research place that is expected to increase learning motivation, student involvement, and their learning outcomes through the

implementation of the Powtoon application. Basically, this school is one of the leading schools in Banjarbaru City that has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum gradually, so that it is the right place to implement technology-based learning innovations such as Powtoon. In addition, the characteristics of students at SMP Negeri 1 Banjarbaru who are diverse and have a fairly good level of digital literacy provide a great opportunity for the application of interactive digital learning media. This is because these conditions show the existence of a learning ecosystem that is adaptive to educational technology innovations (Ayres & Ackermans, 2025). Social studies teachers at this school also show enthusiasm for the development of innovative learning models, so that it is expected to support the success of the implementation of Powtoon as an educational animation medium in improving the quality of social studies learning (Results of Researcher's Observations, September 2025). The diversity of students' characteristics, both in terms of learning styles, critical thinking skills, and preferences for visual media, demands a flexible and contextual pedagogical approach. In this context, Powtoon is present as a pedagogic instrument that is able to integrate visual, auditory, and narrative elements in harmony, thus enabling the creation of a more meaningful and student-centered learning experience (Yotta, 2023). Furthermore, teachers' enthusiasm in adopting technology-based learning media reflects professional readiness that is relevant to the demands of the digital era and the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Openness to innovation is an important capital in the transformation of the social studies learning paradigm which has tended to be textual towards more interactive, reflective, and contextual learning. Thus, the application of Powtoon is expected not only to be an alternative media, but also as a catalyst for change towards transformative social studies learning oriented towards 21st century competency development (Syarifuddin et al., 2025).

Method

This research uses a qualitative method with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach that emphasizes collaboration between researchers, teachers, and students in designing, implementing, and reflecting social studies learning innovations based on the Powtoon application. The PAR approach was chosen because it allows for changes in learning practices through a continuous participatory and reflective process (Dancis et al., 2023). Basically, real action to improve educational practices through the direct involvement of school stakeholders (Kemmis et al., 2014). The research was carried out at SMP Negeri 1 Banjarbaru by involving social studies teachers, students, and school principals as the main participants. The research process is divided into three stages, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning stage, researchers and teachers identify social studies learning problems and design educational animation media using Powtoon. The implementation stage is carried out by applying the media in the classroom through several learning meetings, while

the evaluation stage is focused on reflection on the results of the implementation, including the effectiveness of the media, learning motivation, and student participation. Data collection techniques include observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation to obtain in-depth data on learning processes and outcomes. Data analysis is carried out thematically with data reduction steps, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The validity of the findings is maintained through source triangulation, member checking, and reflection with participants in each research cycle.

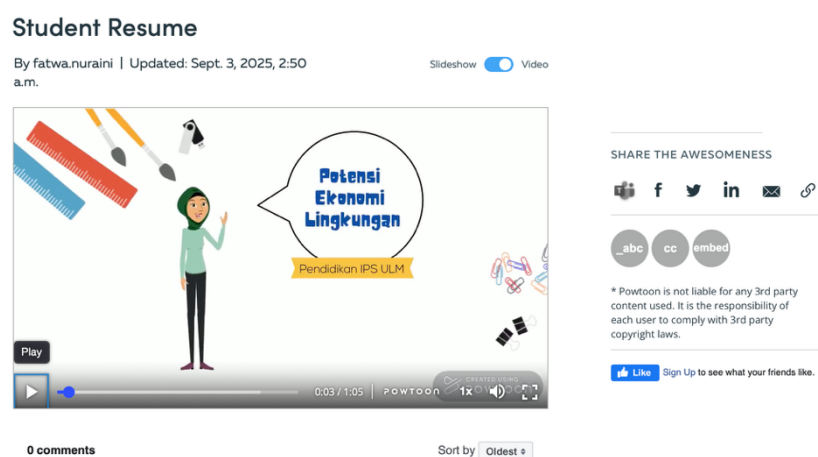
Results and Discussion

The results of this study show that the application of Powtoon media in social studies learning has a positive impact on improving the quality of the process and learning outcomes. This media is able to change the dynamics of learning from what was previously passive and teacher-centered to active, participatory, and student-centered. These findings suggest that the use of digital animation can improve students' cognitive and affective engagement (Toharudin & Kurniawan, 2023). In addition, this study states that the integration of interactive animation technology is able to increase students' learning motivation and strengthen information retention. With engaging visualizations and structured narratives, Powtoon serves as a bridge between abstract content and students' concrete experiences (Cristine et al., 2023). Based on the results of the research, there are three stages that can be described as innovations in the use of the Powtoon application in social studies learning, namely the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages.

The planning stage began with observation and identification activities of the social studies learning process at SMP Negeri 1 Banjarbaru. Based on the results of initial observations, it is known that learning is still dominated by conventional lecture and discussion methods that have minimal use of digital media. Teachers generally rely on textbooks and simple PowerPoint-based teaching materials. This causes the learning process to be less interesting, and students seem passive in responding to conceptual and abstract material, such as the theme of social interaction and community structure. Even though teachers at the school have various technology facilities that can be used. Through participatory discussions between researchers and social studies teachers, it is felt that there is a need for learning media innovations that are able to bridge the gap between the needs of students and the characteristics of social studies materials. The Powtoon app was then chosen because it has the potential to deliver educational animations that are interactive, dynamic, and easily accessible to teachers (Oktoberiansyah et al., 2025). This media is considered suitable for the learning context at the

junior high school level because it is able to combine interesting visual, narrative, and musical elements without requiring high technical skills.

Figure 1. An Example of Powtoon Application



Next, the researcher developed a short training plan for teachers to develop the ability to create animated videos with Powtoon. The training activities include feature introduction, storyboard preparation techniques, and integration of learning materials into an animation format. In addition, the preparation of teaching modules with an emphasis on digital media-based learning was also carried out, in line with the principles of student-centered learning in the Independent Curriculum. At this stage, teachers are also involved in determining the success indicators and evaluation strategies of Powtoon media-based learning (Subiyakto et al., 2024).

Second, the implementation of the implementation stage began through service activities in the form of training for social studies teachers in Banjarbaru City (Fatimah et al., 2025). This activity is the first step in introducing innovative learning concepts based on educational animation using the Powtoon application. In the training, the researcher and his team provided technical assistance on how to make an animated learning video that suits the characteristics of social studies material (Tiono et al., 2025). Teachers are trained starting from storyboard planning, character creation and animation, to composing interesting and communicative narratives. This approach aims to ensure that teachers have basic skills in integrating digital media into the learning process, as well as fostering awareness of the importance of technology-based innovation in supporting the Merdeka Curriculum. After the training activity, social studies teachers were accompanied to start producing learning media using Powtoon in accordance with themes relevant to the curriculum (Triyono, Abbas, et al., 2025). At this stage, the researcher acts as a facilitator who provides technical and pedagogical guidance, while the teacher acts as the main practitioner who adapts the material according to the needs of his class.

Through this collaboration, teachers are not only media users, but also creators of educational content that understand the learning context in depth.

The next stage is the application of training results in the learning process in the classroom (Triyono, Ilhami, et al., 2025). Teachers use Powtoon animated videos that have been created as the main medium in the introductory activities to arouse students' motivation and interest in learning. The 3-5 minute animated video features interesting illustrations, sound effects, and contextual narratives that depict social phenomena in daily life. After the video playback, teachers facilitate discussions and collaborative activities where students are asked to analyze the content of the video and relate it to their real experiences (Hadi et al., 2025). This process shows positive changes: students appear more enthusiastic, actively ask questions, and are able to express critical ideas openly.

Figure 2. Material Creation with the Powtoon App



The results of the observation show that this implementation approach through service and collaboration has a significant impact on improving the quality of social studies learning. Teachers who were previously unaccustomed to using digital media began to show confidence in utilizing learning technology. Meanwhile, students respond positively to animation-based learning because it is easier to understand concepts and find learning more enjoyable. A participatory approach between researchers and teachers in the implementation stage not only produces innovative learning media, but also builds a collaborative learning ecosystem that supports the improvement of digital literacy in the school environment (Nur'aini et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the evaluation activity is carried out after the entire learning series is completed through collaborative reflection between researchers, teachers, and students (Muliasari et al., 2025). The evaluation involves three main aspects, namely student

involvement, media effectiveness, and learning outcomes (Safitri et al., 2025). In terms of involvement, teachers and researchers noted an increase in student enthusiasm during the learning process. Based on the results of observations and teachers' reflection journals, students are more active in asking questions, discussing, and providing concrete examples from real life. This shows that Powtoon media has succeeded in creating a more participatory learning atmosphere (Fragulis et al., 2025). In terms of media effectiveness, the teacher stated that Powtoon helps in conveying abstract concepts, especially materials that require visual illustration (Kleftodimos, 2024). Animation media makes it easier for students to understand dynamic social processes, which are difficult to explain through text alone (Syarifuddin et al., 2025). However, there were also technical obstacles, such as the limitations of computer devices in schools and the time required to produce animated videos. Meanwhile, from the results of the formative test given after learning, it can be seen that the average score of students is increased compared to the results before the implementation of Powtoon. Students also show improved critical and communicative thinking skills in class discussions. Based on the results of the interviews, most of the students stated that they felt more motivated to learn social studies because the media used was more interesting and in accordance with their visual learning style. As a reflection, teachers realize the importance of using educational technology in improving the quality of learning. They are committed to continuing to develop similar digital media in the future with the support of advanced training and collaboration between teachers (Safitri et al., 2025).

Conclusion

This study shows that social studies learning innovations through the use of the Powtoon application as an educational animation are able to have a positive impact on the learning process at SMP Negeri 1 Banjarbaru. The use of Powtoon makes the presentation of the material more interesting, interactive, and easy for students to understand. The resulting animation media not only helps students understand abstract concepts in social studies subjects, but also increases their engagement and motivation during the learning process. Through the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach which consists of three stages, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation. This research emphasizes the importance of collaboration between researchers and teachers in developing innovative learning media. In the planning stage, teachers are actively involved in designing animated content that suits the curriculum and the characteristics of students. Meanwhile, the implementation stage is carried out through

training activities and teacher assistance in utilizing the Powtoon application, which has been proven to improve the pedagogic skills and digital literacy of social studies teachers.

The use of the Powtoon application makes students more enthusiastic, actively discussing, and able to relate subject matter to daily life through animated visualization. This shows that Powtoon is effectively used as a learning medium that is able to accommodate students' visual and auditory learning styles. In addition, teachers find it helpful because this media can be reused and adapted for various learning topics, thereby improving the efficiency and quality of teaching. Overall, this study emphasizes that the use of the Powtoon application as an educational animation medium is a form of social studies learning innovation that is relevant to the demands of the digital era and the Merdeka Curriculum. The use of technology in learning not only improves the quality of learning, but also fosters students' creativity and critical thinking skills. Therefore, it is recommended that social studies teachers continue to develop their digital competencies and utilize various technology platforms to create more interesting, meaningful, and student-centered learning.

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