



History learning as a reinforcement of sustainable development awareness: A literature review

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development is a global agenda that requires the harmonization of environmental, social, and economic aspects to ensure the sustainability of current and future generations. In Indonesia, challenges such as deforestation and social inequality demonstrate the need to increase sustainability awareness through education, especially history learning. This article aims to examine the role of history learning in strengthening awareness of sustainable development. The article was prepared using a qualitative approach through literature study and content analysis, reviewing academic literature relevant to history education and sustainability issues. The results of the review show that historical materials, such as the exploitation of resources in the colonial era, can be integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to improve students' understanding of sustainability aspects. Context-based approaches and project-based learning can be proven to be capable of encouraging students' critical thinking and proactive attitudes towards environmental and social issues. However, the implementation of this approach is constrained by curriculum density, limited teacher training, and lack of learning resources. Therefore, curriculum revision and teacher training based on Education for Sustainable Development is needed to optimize the role of history education in supporting sustainable development in Indonesia.



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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development is a global agenda that emphasizes harmonization between environmental, social, and economic aspects to ensure the survival of current and future generations. In the Indonesian context, challenges such as deforestation, pollution, and social inequality demand collective efforts to raise public awareness of sustainability principles. Education (later) played a crucial role in this agenda, particularly history education, which has the potential to shape a critical understanding of man's relationship with his environment (Rulianto & Hartono, 2018). By examining the resource management practices and environmental impacts of past civilizations, learning history can be an effective means of instilling sustainability values among the younger generation (Sumardin & Henri, 2024)

History education in Indonesia generally focuses on the narrative of the struggle for independence, cultural development, and national political dynamics. However, historical aspects related to natural resource management, such as traditional irrigation systems or customary forest management, often receive less attention in relation to sustainability issues. In fact, combining historical material with an environmental context can enrich students' understanding of the relevance of the past to present challenges, such as climate change and ecosystem degradation. An approach based on local wisdom has been proven to be able to increase students' awareness of environmental conservation, while strengthening cultural identity (Firmansyah et al., 2022; Pramesti & Yuliati, 2024).

Although this potential is great, the low awareness of the young generation on the principles of sustainable development is a major challenge. Many students in Indonesia still have a limited understanding of the concept of sustainability, especially in terms of responsibility towards the environment and society. This is partly due to the history curriculum that tends to be oriented to historical facts without connecting them to contemporary issues. As a result, history lessons are often felt to be less relevant by students in dealing with global issues such as the climate crisis or social inequality (Pratama & Sari, 2021).

This challenge is exacerbated by the lack of integration of sustainability issues in history teaching practices in Indonesia. Many history teachers do not have adequate skills or training to connect history materials with sustainability principles, as contained in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Juryatina et al., 2024). In fact, local history materials, such as water management during the royal period or resource exploitation in the colonial era, can be relevant case studies to teach the values of sustainability. This gap demonstrates the need for a more contextual and targeted teaching approach to maximize the potential of history education in shaping sustainability awareness (Kader, 2022; Muis et al., 2023).

This article aims to examine how history learning can strengthen awareness of sustainable development among students. In particular, this study will analyze the effectiveness of the use of historical materials based on local contexts, such as traditional resource management systems, in improving students' understanding of sustainability principles. In addition, this research will formulate teaching strategies that can be adopted by history teachers to integrate sustainability issues in the curriculum, so that learning becomes more relevant to local and global challenges.

Theoretically, this article is expected to enrich the academic discourse on the role of history education in supporting education for sustainable development. This article can also be an input for education policymakers to revise the history curriculum to be more aligned with the goals of *the SDGs*, especially in the Indonesian context. Thus, this article seeks to bridge the gap between history education and the need to build sustainability awareness among younger generations. By drawing on lessons from the past, such as sustainable resource management practices or the impact of environmental degradation, learning history can inspire students to become agents of change who care about the environment and society (Prayogi, 2023; Prayogi & Nasrullah, 2024).

METHOD

This article was prepared with a qualitative approach through a literature study method using content analysis. The literature study was chosen to explore in-depth insights into how

history learning can strengthen sustainable development awareness through the analysis of relevant documents, especially in the form of academic literature. Content analysis is used to identify themes, concepts, and approaches related to the integration of sustainability issues in history education, especially in the Indonesian context. This approach allows researchers to understand patterns and relationships between historical materials, without the need for primary data collection in the field (Nasrullah et al., 2024; Prayogi et al., 2025).

The data in this study was collected through a search of academic literature on an online database *Google Scholar*. Keywords used in searches include "history learning", "history education", "sustainable development", "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)", and "local wisdom", both in Indonesian and English. The search was limited to publications relevant to the current discourse around the SDGs and history education.

The article screening process is carried out with clear inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria include: (1) articles or books that discuss the relationship between history education and sustainability issues, (2) relevance to the Indonesian context or have implications that can be applied in Indonesia, (3) articles published in indexed academic journals or books from trusted publishers, and (4) articles that use a qualitative or quantitative approach with a clear methodology. Exclusion criteria include: (1) articles that are not relevant to history education or sustainability, (2) articles that do not have full access, and (3) articles that do not meet academic standards, such as non-scientific reports or opinions.

Data analysis was carried out using qualitative content analysis techniques to identify key themes, such as the representation of sustainability issues in the history curriculum, teaching strategies that support sustainability awareness, and the relationship of historical materials with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The qualitative analysis process uses a coding model to identify initial categories, connect categories, and formulate relevant key themes. This technique makes it possible to explore how historical material can be integrated with sustainability issues in a systematic and in-depth way, thus generating recommendations for curriculum development and teaching practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Relevance of History to Sustainable Development: A Context-Based Teaching Approach

History, referring to the national education curriculum-, in principle has significant relevance to sustainable development. Historical material, such as resource management during the royal era or the impact of environmental exploitation in the colonial era, can illustrate the relationship between past human decisions and their consequences for environmental, social, and economic sustainability. This can be seen in the discussion of the subak system in Bali which reflects water management practices that are in line with SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), while the history of the global industrial revolution reveals the impact of environmental damage relevant to SDG 13 (Climate Action). However, the history curriculum in Indonesia often does not explicitly link this material to sustainability issues, thus limiting the potential for learning (Hutajulu et al., 2024; Parry & Metzger, 2023).

Context-based teaching approaches can be a solution to bridge (education/knowledge) history with sustainable development. This approach involves the use of historical case studies that are relevant to sustainability issues, both locally and globally. Analysis of the literature

related to methods in history education shows that these methods allow students to understand how historical decisions affect the environment and society today. By linking historical events to contemporary challenges, such as climate change or social inequality, this approach encourages students to develop critical thinking about sustainability (Irfiani et al., 2024). For example, learning about the subak system in Bali, which is integrated into history teaching, can help students identify the principles of resource efficiency and communal cooperation. In this case, students who study these traditional practices are better able to relate history lessons to solutions to current environmental issues, such as sustainable water management. This approach reinforces the historical relevance to the SDGs, particularly in the Indonesian context.

Context-based approaches can also be applied to global history to broaden students' perspectives. For example, an analysis of the impact of the industrial revolution in Europe, which led to pollution and resource exploitation, can be used to discuss SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Integrating global perspectives can help students understand how historical patterns repeat in modern sustainability challenges. This approach encourages students to not only understand historical facts, but also analyze their implications for current environmental policies (Muhartini et al., 2022; Wulandari et al., 2024).

The success of context-based approaches depends on the development of a supportive curriculum and teacher training (Ummah & Utami, 2024). That is adequate given that existing history curricula often do not provide explicit guidance for integrating sustainability issues, making it difficult for teachers to implement this approach. The development of context-based learning modules that include local and global case studies, as well as teacher training to improve competencies is relevant to be undertaken as an effort to connect history with the SDGs.

Project-based learning can also be one method in a context-based approach. This can be seen from the ability to make presentations about the environmental impact of colonialism in Indonesia which can increase student involvement and encourage critical reflection. The students involved are able to relate historical decisions to sustainability issues, such as deforestation or ecosystem destruction. This approach also allows for the development of analytical and creative skills, which are essential for forming sustainability awareness (Lalujan & Pranjol, 2024; Nugraha et al., 2025).

In the history curriculum, there is material that has not been designed to highlight the sustainability aspect. Topics such as resource exploitation in colonial times often focus on economic and political dimensions, without addressing long-term environmental impacts. This shows that a context-based teaching approach requires learning modules that deliberately connect historical facts with the principles of the SDGs to achieve maximum impact. Without a purposeful design, the historical potential to support sustainability awareness can be overlooked (Wulandari et al., 2024).

History has a strong relevance to sustainable development when taught through a context-based approach. By integrating case studies on both local and global scopes, as well as methods such as project-based learning, history education can be an effective tool for instilling sustainability values. However, successful implementation requires curriculum revision and institutional support to ensure that history is taught as a means to understand and address current and future sustainability challenges.

The Role of Teachers in Connecting History and SDGs

History teachers play a key role in connecting history materials with the SDGs to build sustainability awareness among students. Teachers who are trained in the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach tend to be more effective in integrating sustainability issues in history teaching. In learning, these teachers use strategies such as primary historical source-based discussions to link past events, such as environmental damage due to colonial exploitation, with SDGs goals, such as SDG 15 (Terrestrial Ecosystems) (Guo et al., 2024; Vioeza et al., 2023). Teachers trained in ESD can use local historical sources, such as customary forest management, to illustrate sustainability principles. This approach not only enriches students' understanding of local history, but also motivates them to apply sustainability values in their daily lives (Segara, 2015).

The role of teachers is not only limited to the delivery of material, but also to the facilitation of critical discussions that encourage students to reflect on the relevance of history to contemporary issues. Teachers who use contextual approaches, such as linking the history of traditional water management to SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), can improve students' understanding of environmental responsibility. Teachers can also play a role in designing activities that encourage students to think critically about historical impacts on sustainability (Lalujan & Pranjol, 2024; Muhartini et al., 2022; Wulandari et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the teacher's role still depends on training and access to resources. This is considering that many history teachers in Indonesia have not received special training on ESD, which limits their ability to integrate sustainability issues. Training that focuses on the use of primary historical sources and a project-based approach can improve teacher competence in this regard (Cebrián & Junyent, 2015). History teachers have a strategic role in connecting history with the SDGs, which in turn can influence students' attitudes and behaviors towards sustainability. With adequate training and relevant teaching approaches, teachers can make history learning a catalyst for positive changes in students' awareness and actions.

History learning that is integrated with SDGs aspects allows for changes in students' attitudes towards environmental and social issues. This is because students who engage in context-based learning, such as projects on the environmental impact of the industrial revolution in Indonesia, show increased willingness to participate in environmental actions, such as recycling campaigns. History learning that is integrated with the SDGs can positively influence student behavior. Students who are exposed to contextual learning tend to show a proactive attitude towards sustainability, although in practice it will depend heavily on the school context and community support (Lestari et al., 2024; Tareze et al., 2022).

Challenges in the Implementation of SDGs Integrated Historical Learning

The implementation of history learning that is integrated with the SDGs issues faces a number of challenges. The history curriculum in Indonesia is often packed with compulsory material, leaving little room to integrate sustainability issues (Azhar, 2020). In addition, the lack of resources, such as textbooks that link history to the SDGs, is a major obstacle for teachers.

Furthermore, another challenge is in the form of limited teacher training in the Education for Sustainable Development approach. History teachers in Indonesia are still not trained to integrate sustainability issues in their teaching, which leads to teaching approaches

remaining conventional and focusing on memorizing historical facts. This limits students' ability to see historical relevance to contemporary challenges. Not only that, but limited access to primary historical sources that are relevant to sustainability is also a problem. Many schools, especially in rural areas, lack access to documents or teaching materials that can link local history to the principles of the SDGs. Such conditions widen the gap in the quality of history learning between urban and rural schools (Arum, 2007).

In addition to curriculum and training challenges, resistance to changes in teaching practices is also an obstacle. Some history teachers tend to maintain the traditional approach because of the convenience or lack of incentive to adopt new methods. This resistance is often reinforced by pressure to meet strict curriculum targets, so innovations such as context-based teaching or sustainability projects are often overlooked. This limits the potential of history learning to be a transformative tool in supporting sustainability awareness among students

The implications of these challenges show the need for a systemic approach to support the implementation of history learning that is integrated with the SDGs. In addition to curriculum revisions and teacher training, collaboration with local communities can enrich learning resources, such as through the involvement of indigenous leaders to share knowledge about sustainable traditional practices. This approach not only reinforces the relevance of local history, but also builds students' engagement with their communities, which is aligned with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). However, the implementation of this kind of collaboration requires institutional support, such as funding and coordination between stakeholders. This condition then requires the need to revise the historical curriculum to explicitly include sustainability issues, for example through modules based on local wisdom such as the subak system or customary forest management. In addition, teacher training focused on ESD and context-based approaches can increase the effectiveness of history teaching in building sustainability awareness. Overall, despite the challenges in its implementation, history learning has great potential to support sustainability awareness if supported by relevant curriculum and adequate teacher training so that the development of educational resources and advanced research is needed to overcome existing limitations.

CONCLUSION

History learning has great potential to strengthen awareness of sustainable development among students through a context-based approach that integrates Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) issues. By leveraging local case studies such as the subak system in Bali or customary forest management, as well as global histories such as the impact of the industrial revolution, history education can bridge students' understanding of the relationship between historical decisions and today's sustainability challenges. This approach not only increases the relevance of history learning, but also encourages students' critical thinking and proactive attitudes towards environmental and social issues. However, the success of this approach depends on the explicit revision of the curriculum integrating sustainability issues, teacher training in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and the development of contextual learning modules. Thus, history education can be an important catalyst in shaping a young generation that cares about environmental, social, and economic sustainability. The main challenges in implementing this approach include curriculum density, limited teacher training, and lack of access to relevant learning resources, especially in rural areas. To overcome these

barriers, a systemic approach is needed that includes collaboration with local communities, the development of educational resources based on local wisdom, and institutional support such as funding and coordination between stakeholders. By overcoming these challenges, history learning can be optimized as a means of transformation that not only enriches academic discourse, but also makes a real contribution to the achievement of the SDGs in Indonesia. Therefore, investment in curriculum development and teacher capacity is a crucial step to ensure that history education can inspire students to become agents of change committed to sustainable development.

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