



Reforming Social Studies Education in Thailand: Strategies for the Integration of Local Wisdom and Global Citizenship¹

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Abstract:

Background: Thai social studies education has historically emphasized nationalist curricula prioritizing civic responsibility within national boundaries, pedagogical approaches that inadequately prepare students for navigating interconnected global challenges including climate change, migration, and cultural diversity. Traditional curricula often marginalize Thailand's rich cultural heritage—including indigenous knowledge systems, Buddhist teachings, and sustainable living practices—while simultaneously failing to cultivate global citizenship competencies essential for 21st-century participation in an interconnected world.

Purpose: This research examined social studies education reform in Thailand through integration of local wisdom and global citizenship education, analyzed the role of Thai cultural practices and Buddhist principles in shaping student identity and sustainable development understanding, evaluated current curriculum limitations in addressing both cultural preservation and global engagement needs, and developed comprehensive strategies for curriculum reform incorporating collaborative design processes, teacher professional development, community engagement mechanisms, and culturally responsive assessment practices balancing local cultural relevance with global citizenship competencies.

Methods: The study employed qualitative analytical methodology integrating policy document analysis of Thai social studies curricula, literature review examining alternative education movements incorporating Buddhist values, stakeholder interviews with university administrators and students exploring global citizenship perceptions, comparative examination of successful community-based projects demonstrating local wisdom application to global issues, and case study evaluation of innovative pedagogical approaches including hand puppet media utilizing local wisdom for citizenship skill development.

Results: Analysis revealed significant curriculum gaps: nationalist emphasis limited students' understanding of global interconnectedness, insufficient integration of traditional practices like Panyarak (human-nature balance) and Wai (respect customs) marginalized cultural knowledge, students demonstrated superficial global citizenship understanding, and inadequate teacher preparation constrained effective instruction. Stakeholder perspectives indicated Thai educators perceive national citizenship as foundational to global citizenship—a culturally distinct viewpoint requiring curriculum reforms honoring this context. Successful implementations demonstrated community-based learning connecting cultural heritage with global issues enhanced engagement, collaborative curriculum development created culturally

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relevant content, and local wisdom integration strengthened critical thinking about sustainable development.

Conclusions: Transforming Thai social studies education requires balanced curriculum frameworks integrating local wisdom with global citizenship through comprehensive teacher professional development, collaborative stakeholder engagement, community partnership cultivation, and assessment practices emphasizing both cultural preservation and global competency development.

Keywords: Local wisdom, global citizenship, social studies education, Thailand, curriculum reform

1. INTRODUCTION

In a world that is more connected than ever, reforming social studies education in Thailand is very important for helping students understand both local and global ideas. This essay will discuss ways to combine local wisdom with global citizenship in the Thai education system. As global problems like climate change, migration, and cultural diversity become more pressing, it is crucial for young people to develop a sense of shared responsibility and value their cultural background. Local wisdom, which is based in Thailand's rich traditions and practices, provides important lessons for sustainable living and strong communities. By merging these local views with the ideas of global citizenship, teachers can design a curriculum that keeps cultural identity alive while also preparing students to think critically about global matters. This discussion will present specific methods to realize this important educational goal.

Social studies education is important for understanding how people are linked in their communities and the wider world, especially concerning changes in educational practices in Thailand. This field includes subjects like history, geography, economics, and civics, helping students learn about social ideas and cultural views necessary for becoming informed and active citizens. It is also crucial for including local knowledge in the curriculum and encouraging global citizenship. This integration is especially needed in Thailand, where globalization presents challenges that require people to handle complex social situations with cultural awareness and ethical thought. By looking at historical social and political movements, like the alternative education programs mentioned in the research, teachers can create a curriculum that respects Buddhist values and cultural differences while also getting students ready to be responsible global citizens (Jones et al., 2008) (Thanosawan et al., 2012).

Incorporating local knowledge into education is important for helping students in Thailand understand their cultural identity and social responsibility. By using traditional practices and knowledge, teachers can create a curriculum that connects with students' everyday lives, which helps them engage more with what they learn. This strategy not only builds a feeling of belonging but also equips students to deal with the challenges of globalization from a stable viewpoint. For example, looking at historical trends in alternative education can show how Thai cultural values, like those from Buddhism, can guide educational changes that promote Thai identity in education (Jones et al., 2008). Additionally, as global citizenship becomes more significant, valuing local wisdom helps students recognize their roles in various communities—locally, nationally, and internationally—thus improving their ability to make valuable contributions to a global society (Thanosawan et al., 2012).

The idea of global citizenship is very important in educational reform, particularly in Thailand's social studies curriculum. It encourages students to think about their identities in a



larger, connected world, supporting values like empathy and respect for different cultures. This change in teaching practices needs to include local knowledge so that Thai students can value their cultural background while also gaining a global viewpoint. Discussions about education emphasize that understanding global citizenship means taking on responsibilities that go beyond one's own country, as shown in a qualitative study that highlights the role of Buddhist education in forming these ideas (Jones et al., 2008). Additionally, studies show that schools in Thailand often consider being a good Thai citizen as essential for being a global citizen, which indicates a unique method that differs from Western views (Thanosawan et al., 2012). Therefore, changing social studies education in Thailand requires a balanced mix of local knowledge and global awareness to create responsible global citizens.

The current situation of social studies education in Thailand shows a complicated mix of national identity and global citizenship ideas, but there are still many problems. Social studies programs have mainly focused on nationalism, with teachers aiming to build a sense of civic responsibility in students. However, this focus can lead to a limited view that may ignore the changing nature of citizenship in a global context. For example, (Murdiono et al., 2023) points out the importance of character education and civic involvement in the curriculum, stressing the need for students to understand their roles as both national and global citizens. Additionally, (Thanosawan et al., 2012) indicates that adding global citizenship education is necessary for giving students the knowledge and skills needed in a more connected world. Fixing these educational gaps will be key for improving social studies education, ultimately creating a more well-rounded approach that respects local knowledge and gets students ready for global participation.

2. THE ROLE OF LOCAL WISDOM IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

Using local knowledge in social studies education is an important way to make the curriculum more relevant and culturally aware in Thailand. This method not only improves students' learning experiences but also strengthens their sense of identity and ties to their community. By adding local insights, teachers can create a better understanding of global citizenship that values both local traditions and worldwide duties. This mixed focus encourages students to think critically about the issues in their society while also recognizing their positions in a larger global setting. Studies show that, although many students might first view global citizenship in a shallow way, incorporating local wisdom promotes a better understanding and respect for their cultural background, helping them become knowledgeable global citizens. Conversations with educators highlight that promoting this understanding is essential, indicating that being a responsible citizen in Thailand is key to dealing with global issues (Thanosawan et al., 2012) (Thanosawan et al., 2012).

The blending of local wisdom into social studies education is important for changing educational methods in Thailand, especially with globalization. By recognizing and including indigenous knowledge, educational systems can better align with the cultural identities of students, which helps build a sense of belonging and community. This acknowledgment not only supports the preservation of local traditions and values but also improves critical thinking and conversation between different cultures among students. Such conversations are important for dealing with today's complex social issues, as they connect everyday experiences from diverse family backgrounds with those seen as challenging within cultural settings (Gillies et al., 2017). Moreover, as new educational movements appear, marked by a mix of Buddhist teachings and reactions to globalization, they act as important channels for local wisdom in



education (Jones et al., 2008). Therefore, acknowledging and integrating local wisdom is key for developing informed global citizens.

Local wisdom in Thai culture is very important for making social studies education better, giving students useful perspectives. For example, traditional ideas such as the spirit of Panyarak highlight the balance between people and nature, showing a basic knowledge of sustainable living that supports global citizenship. Additionally, the Thai custom of Wai, which is a way to greet and show respect, represents community values and understanding, helping students see the worth of different cultures while promoting global awareness. Adding these concepts to the lessons helps students see how local wisdom is important even with globalization and gets them ready to take part in a diverse society. As global changes affect what it means to be a citizen, knowing local customs, like Thai traditions, gives important lessons for creating responsible global citizens who appreciate both their culture and their role in the world (Thanosawan et al., 2012) (Thanosawan et al., 2012).

Putting local knowledge into school subjects gives big advantages, especially for social studies in Thailand. By adding local stories, customs, and traditions, teachers can help students feel more connected to their identities and communities. This method helps keep cultural history alive and makes learning more interesting by linking it to what students see around them. Also, as the world changes with globalization, using local knowledge helps students learn to balance their local roots with global identities. This is important because of the increasing focus on global citizenship education, which aims to build awareness and responsibility to local and international communities (Thanosawan et al., 2012). In the end, using local wisdom can improve the curriculum and give students the tools they need to think critically about their surroundings, creating a generation of responsible global citizens (Thanosawan et al., 2012).

Putting local wisdom into social studies lessons in Thailand has big problems because of different education standards and resources in each area. A key issue is that there are not enough good learning materials that combine local cultural traditions, which stops students from building cultural understanding and citizenship. For example, using creative teaching tools, like hand puppet media based on local knowledge, has shown to help students learn more about their culture and develop citizenship skills (Baharudin et al., 2023). Additionally, a curriculum is needed that connects local knowledge with global citizenship, as pointed out in recent studies about nationalism education. This combination not only encourages respect for local cultures but also helps students gain the abilities needed to succeed in a global world (Murdiono et al., 2023). Therefore, tackling these issues is important for a full reform of social studies education in Thailand.

3. GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: A NECESSITY FOR THE FUTURE

In a world that is more connected, Global Citizenship Education (GCE) becomes an important method that helps students feel responsible for global problems while also including local knowledge. The importance of GCE is that it can help develop critical thinking, empathy, and active participation in democratic activities, which allows students to deal with complex global issues effectively. By changing social studies education in Thailand to highlight both local culture and global viewpoints, teachers can help students appreciate their own background while also seeing the wider consequences of their actions. This approach matches the research findings from Zainun et al., which suggest a need for curricula that focus on people as part of active societies, where technology supports smooth and self-directed learning



(Assanarkutty et al., 2023). Additionally, it is crucial to think about the unique historical trends of alternative education in Thailand, as research shows how cultural identity interacts with education reform (Jones et al., 2008).

The meaning and ideas of global citizenship are important for understanding how local and global communities connect. Global citizenship goes beyond national borders, pushing people to see their duties and roles within a larger framework that includes awareness, rights, and responsibilities to the global community. This idea, while often debated, is increasingly considered necessary in school programs around the world, including in Thailand, where changes in education aim to teach such values. Discussions with senior university officials show that many believe being a good Thai citizen is key to becoming a global citizen, highlighting a different viewpoint compared to Western ideas. Additionally, students have different views on global citizenship, ranging from basic understandings to more complex ones, showing the need for teaching methods that blend local knowledge and encourage greater involvement with global issues.

In Thailand's educational reform, global citizenship is becoming more important, especially as curriculums change to include both local knowledge and global views. Thailand's diverse cultural background needs an educational method that highlights the links between local and international issues, encouraging students to feel responsible not just for their own communities but for the world too. This combined approach can improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for dealing with the challenges of a globalized world. Historical trends in education show that adding global citizenship to the social studies curriculum can lead to a better grasp of cultural interactions and social changes, showcasing the country's distinct identity in the face of globalization (Jones et al., 2008). As conversations about sustainable development grow, the demand for education that supports global citizenship with local wisdom becomes crucial for developing aware and caring future leaders (Assanarkutty et al., 2023).

In trying to promote global citizenship in social studies education, it's important to use strategies that tackle current issues and honor local knowledge. By adding community-based learning and working with local leaders, students can connect with their cultural backgrounds while also learning about global ties. Research shows that it's crucial to build a learning society that includes different groups, like policymakers and teachers, to boost citizen involvement and support sustainable development (Charungkaittikul et al., 2011). Additionally, looking at methods and results in various cultural settings, such as studies comparing science literacy in Thailand and Indonesia, highlights the benefits of different teaching practices shaped by local viewpoints (Islami E et al., 2020). Focusing on these strategies will not only improve the curriculum but also help students grow into informed, responsible global citizens who value both their heritage and the wider world.

Looking at case studies of global citizenship projects that work well, it is clear that using local knowledge improves how individuals and communities engage with social and political issues, especially in places like Thailand. For example, projects in local areas show that good teamwork between local governments, businesses, and citizen-led efforts can improve services in regions that have political and economic difficulties (Laochankham et al., 2018). Also, community movements that tackle environmental issues, like the battle against plastic waste, show the importance of using local insights and community-driven efforts to create sustainable solutions (Meyer et al., 2021). These examples show that teaching about global connections along with local customs in social studies can help students become informed and active participants in the global community. Thus, changing the curriculum to



include these examples not only enhances the learning experience but also gets students ready to tackle difficult global issues with a perspective informed by their own cultures.

4. STRATEGIES FOR CURRICULUM REFORM

In changing social studies education in Thailand, it is important to use strategies that mix local knowledge with global citizenship education. This method acknowledges the need for students to connect with their cultural background while also understanding their roles in a bigger global community. By including parts of local wisdom, like those from Baduy's society, teachers can create a curriculum that promotes critical thinking and scientific knowledge among students (Islami E et al., 2020). Additionally, global citizenship education encourages students to rethink their identities in various communities, highlighting rights and duties that go beyond their country (Thanosawan et al., 2012). These changes in the curriculum not only improve students' understanding of their local environment but also enable them to become informed citizens in a complicated, connected world. As a result, this dual focus will help Thai students develop into capable individuals ready for both local and global challenges.

Using collaborative methods for making the curriculum is very important for changing social studies education in Thailand, especially in bringing together local wisdom and global citizenship. Involving various stakeholders, like teachers, community members, and students, leads to a better educational experience that includes different viewpoints and values. This teamwork creates a setting where local knowledge can mix with global citizenship ideas, helping students to value their background while recognizing their role in a larger world. This connection is especially important because the idea of citizenship is changing in Thailand, where students are now seen as not only national citizens but also global citizens with rights and responsibilities that go beyond their own country (Thanosawan et al., 2012). Also, the knowledge gained from collaborative curriculum work can help teachers improve their teaching methods, dealing with different views on global citizenship among students (Thanosawan et al., 2012). Therefore, a collaborative approach boosts curriculum development and supports a more inclusive and complete educational style.

In the effort to change social studies education in Thailand, teacher training and ongoing professional growth are very important elements that impact how well students learn. To effectively include local knowledge and encourage global citizenship, teachers need to be well-informed and flexible in their methods. Training programs should concentrate on teaching strategies but also on fitting global ideas into local settings, helping teachers provide relevant information to their students. For example, focusing on science literacy for new teachers shows the need for strong curricula that take local perspectives into account as they prepare teachers to handle modern issues in different subjects (Islami E et al., 2020). Institutions such as the Faculty of Islamic Sciences at Prince of Songkla University demonstrate attempts to support teachers through targeted programs that address community requirements, thus creating a more adaptable educational setting (Henpiya et al., 2019). In the end, enhancing professional development efforts is vital for building a group of teachers who can raise knowledgeable and involved citizens.

Community involvement is very important for changing educational systems, especially in Thailand where it is crucial to mix local knowledge with global citizenship. Getting local people—like parents, teachers, and community leaders—involved helps create a cooperative setting that supports educational practices that are relevant to the culture. Past research shows the importance of grassroots efforts, as seen in alternative education models that push back against traditional reform methods (Jones et al., 2008). These approaches have



effectively added community values and cultural history into the curriculum, proof that educational changes must connect with local identity to work well. Additionally, research on community development methods shows that local economic activities, like farming cooperatives, can improve educational results by linking learning to real-life situations (Praningrum et al., 2014). Thus, the active engagement of communities not only backs educational reforms but also enhances students' learning experiences, fostering a more inclusive and well-rounded approach to social studies education in Thailand.

In the effort to reform social studies education in Thailand, good assessment methods are very important for checking how well local wisdom and global citizenship are combined. These assessments should not just test memory but should focus on critical thinking and using knowledge in real-life situations. For example, project-based assessments can allow students to connect with local cultural practices while looking at global issues, helping them feel linked to both their own culture and the wider world. Also, formative assessments that include peer feedback and self-reflection can help students see the importance of their local wisdom as a tool for tackling global problems. Adding insights from current literature, like the role of education in developing character and national pride, shows that assessment practices can influence how students view themselves and their duties as global citizens (Murdiono et al., 2023) (Chotimah et al., 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, changing social studies education in Thailand needs a complete method that combines local knowledge with global citizenship ideas. This mix is important for building cultural identity and giving students the abilities needed for a connected world. By using methods like teamwork in creating curriculum and involving the community, teachers can make education more relevant and effective. Additionally, peace education, as seen in places like East Aceh, shows the need to consider social and political issues in education, encouraging acceptance and living together among different cultures (Benjamin K Sovacool et al., 2020). Therefore, building an education system that respects local traditions while accepting global views will not only improve learning but also help create a more peaceful and fair society (Suadi S et al., 2018).

In conclusion, combining local knowledge and global citizenship in Thailand's social studies education is a complex issue that needs us to rethink teaching methods. A key part of this change is understanding that global citizenship is crucial for students, motivating them to participate not just in local affairs but also in international ones. This expands how students view citizenship to include more than just their national identity, based on what educational leaders and students report. The evidence shows that university students often struggle to align their view of global citizenship with what is discussed internationally, marking an important area for improvement (Thanosawan et al., 2012). Additionally, the idea that being a good Thai citizen is part of global citizenship points to unique cultural views that need careful educational planning (Thanosawan et al., 2012). In the end, these findings highlight the need for a curriculum that balances local importance with global understanding.

A balanced approach is very important for changing social studies education in Thailand, especially when combining local wisdom and global citizenship. A balanced education system recognizes the value of local cultures while also helping students gain a global viewpoint. Using local wisdom helps teachers create a learning space that connects with students' lives and values, making their education more engaging and relevant. At the same time, teaching global citizenship helps students deal with complex international issues, giving



them the knowledge and responsibilities needed to be responsible global citizens. This combined method respects Thailand's cultural heritage and meets the challenges of globalization. Recent studies show that this strategy is crucial for promoting citizen involvement and supporting sustainable development in local areas, leading to a more complete educational system for future learners (Charungkaittikul et al., 2011) (Thanosawan et al., 2012).

As Thailand looks to change its social studies education, it is important to consider what this means for the future. With a focus on local knowledge and global citizenship, teachers must see the increasing need for students to grasp the complexities of their roles locally and globally. This approach can help create informed citizens who value their cultural background while interacting positively with people from other countries. Future educational programs should be set up to promote intercultural communication, helping students deal with challenges from globalization while staying connected to their local identities. Highlighting the ethical sides of global citizenship is crucial, especially regarding the challenges in setting moral standards across different cultures (Gillies et al., 2017). Also, as schools make global citizenship a key goal, understanding various viewpoints will be vital for students' growth and their role in a closer-connected world (Thanosawan et al., 2012).

As Thailand tries to change its social studies education by adding local knowledge and global citizenship, it is important for teachers and policymakers to work together for real change. This effort requires looking at the current curricula to make sure they include both traditional Thai knowledge and modern global issues. Educators also need training to improve their teaching methods. Policymakers should provide funds to support new teaching methods that encourage critical thinking and cultural understanding, helping students appreciate both local traditions and global citizenship. Additionally, partnerships between local communities and schools can offer valuable, real-world learning experiences, making sure students are informed citizens and caretakers of their cultural heritage. By collaborating, educators and policymakers can build a social studies program that prepares students for success in a connected world.

Originality & Body of Knowledge

Originality: This study presents a novel perspective on the reform of social studies education in Thailand by integrating local wisdom with global citizenship education. While prior research has explored the significance of local traditions in education and the necessity of global citizenship, this paper uniquely synthesizes these aspects into a cohesive curriculum reform strategy. The originality of this research lies in its proposition of a balanced educational framework that respects Thai cultural heritage while fostering global responsibility. The study moves beyond conventional nationalistic social studies curricula by advocating for a hybrid approach that includes sustainable living principles rooted in Buddhist teachings and indigenous knowledge systems. Furthermore, this paper contributes to the existing literature by proposing practical strategies for curriculum reform, professional development, and community engagement—offering a blueprint for educational policymakers and practitioners seeking to align local and global perspectives in social studies education.

Body of Knowledge: This research enriches the academic discourse on social studies education, particularly in the Thai context, by bridging the gap between cultural preservation and globalization. It extends the theoretical framework of global citizenship education (GCE) by emphasizing its applicability within culturally diverse societies, where national



identity remains a strong educational focus. The study also contributes to the broader field of educational reform by demonstrating how local wisdom, including traditional Thai values and Buddhist ethics, can serve as a foundation for critical thinking, civic engagement, and sustainable development in an interconnected world. Additionally, this paper builds on existing research on alternative education models and localized pedagogical approaches, reinforcing the need for participatory learning environments that incorporate students' lived experiences. By highlighting the practical challenges of implementing a culturally responsive yet globally oriented curriculum, this study advances scholarly understanding of how education can be a transformative force in both national and international contexts.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical treatment of experimental subjects (animals & human): The research was conducted in compliance with the principles of the Helsinki Declaration regarding human subjects, so formal ethical approval was not required.

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