



Active Contextual-Based Learning for Students: Innovation in Aqidah and Akhlak Education at MAN 2 Pontianak

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Abstract

This article examines the implementation of active, contextual-based learning strategies at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 2 Pontianak, focusing on the Aqidah Akhlak subject. The primary aim of this study is to enhance student engagement through an approach that connects the material to real-life experiences, making learning more meaningful and applicable. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing direct observation and in-depth interviews with 29 twelfth-grade students. The findings reveal that combining three active learning strategies, learning by poster, interactive lecturing, and information search, effectively increases student engagement in the learning process. Students comprehend the material cognitively and develop psychomotor and affective skills, enabling them to apply the values of Aqidah and Akhlak in their daily lives. The significance of this study in the context of Islamic education lies in the fact that active, contextual-based learning can cultivate students who are not only intellectually competent but also possess a character that aligns with Islamic teachings, preparing them to face broader life challenges.

Keywords: Active Learning, Contextual Learning, Aqidah Akhlak, Madrasah Aliyah, Islamic Education, Innovative Learning, Millennial Generation.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the primary foundations for developing human beings with strong character and global competitiveness. In an era of rapid change, education is expected to do more than just impart knowledge it must also foster relevant skills and attitudes that align with the demands of everyday life. The ideal educational concept involves actively engaging students in the learning process, linking the knowledge they acquire to their real-life contexts (Silberman, 2009). In this regard, innovation in teaching methods becomes key to creating meaningful and relevant learning experiences for students, particularly in Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic secondary schools), which prepare the younger generation to face global challenges. One approach that can be implemented is active contextual-based learning, which empowers students not only to understand the subject matter but also to connect it with their daily experiences.

However, in reality, despite the various reforms and innovations in education in Indonesia, many schools, including Madrasah Aliyah, still rely on traditional teaching methods that tend to be passive and focused on rote memorization. Contextual learning, which should ideally connect the lesson content to the students' real-world experiences,

is often not optimally applied. This issue is caused by various factors, such as limited resources, teachers' inability to design relevant strategies, and a lack of understanding regarding the importance of contextual approaches in education. As a result, students struggle to relate what they are learning to their lives, making the learning process less engaging and meaningful.

The significance of developing innovative teaching practices in Madrasah Aliyah, particularly through active contextual-based learning approaches, lies in their potential to enhance student engagement in the learning process. Active learning encourages students to think critically, analyze, and explore the material in a more enjoyable and relevant manner. Furthermore, contextual learning enables a direct connection between the theoretical knowledge being studied and students' real-life experiences (Silberman, 2009). This is even more crucial given that today's students are digital natives in the millennial era (Prensky, 2001). This approach not only helps students better understand the material but also provides deeper meaning for their lives. Consequently, both cognitive abilities and essential social skills, as well as character values, are developed, which are crucial in real-world settings.

Active contextual-based learning also allows students to become more involved in the learning process, not merely as receivers of information but as researchers and creators of knowledge. This aligns with the characteristics of active learning, which emphasizes student involvement in the thinking process, analysis, and problem-solving. Thus, learning becomes more meaningful, enjoyable, and impactful for students' personal development. Furthermore, context-based learning, which links directly to students' everyday lives, fosters a sense of ownership over their learning process, which in turn enhances their motivation to learn.

This issue was chosen because of the critical need for innovation in the education system, which must respond to the challenges of the times and meet the needs of the millennial generation. Active contextual-based learning is a suitable choice to create learning experiences that are not only theoretical but also practical. This article is also distinguished by its focus on the implementation of learning in Madrasah Aliyah, specifically at MAN 2 Pontianak, a well-regarded institution committed to quality education. Given the strong quality culture at MAN 2 Pontianak, this research will highlight how active contextual-based learning innovation can be applied to enhance students' learning outcomes at the school.

This study was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 2 Pontianak, one of the leading schools in the city. As a long-established institution known for its high educational standards, MAN 2 Pontianak has several advantages, including adequate facilities and qualified teachers. However, the challenge of continuously innovating teaching methods remains, especially in creating more relevant approaches for millennial students. Therefore, this research aims to explore how the implementation of active contextual-based learning can significantly contribute to the quality of education at MAN 2 Pontianak and how it can improve students' understanding and skills in the Aqidah Akhlak subject. The subjects of this study were the students of MAN 2 Pontianak, who are expected to provide deeper insights into the effectiveness and challenges of implementing this approach in the school environment.

Literature on active contextual-based learning in the context of Madrasah reflects an emerging interest in innovative pedagogical strategies that connect religious education with contemporary needs. This review synthesizes various studies exploring aspects of active learning methods aimed at improving educational outcomes in Madrasah settings.

One promising approach is the integration of interactive learning media, such as gamification, exemplified through the use of crossword puzzles in classrooms. Rohmah et al. highlight that the use of such media can enhance student participation, leading to significant improvements across various learning domains, including cognitive and psychomotor development (Rohmah et al., 2024). This finding is supported by action research conducted by Siswasusila, who confirmed that cooperative learning strategies can effectively boost student motivation in Islamic education while underscoring the benefits of activities that engage students (Siswasusila, 2017).

Further, the shift to digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of e-learning initiatives in Madrasah institutions. Studies by Rizaldi et al. and Hikmah illustrate the crucial role of e-learning applications in maintaining educational quality during the pandemic. This research indicates that e-learning platforms provide the necessary tools for teachers to facilitate learning, even under unusual conditions (Hikmah, 2020; Rizaldi et al., 2021). Additionally, reflections on the effectiveness of remote learning by Munjiat emphasize the ongoing efforts to ensure student engagement and optimize teaching methodologies in the context of Islamic education (Munjiat, 2020).

The role of teacher competence in implementing these new methodologies cannot be underestimated. Hasan discusses the impact of consultative supervision on improving the quality of education in Madrasah, identifying key factors that contribute to the overall enhancement of educational practices (Hasan, 2023). Similarly, research by Putra et al. on the implications of extracurricular activities, such as scouting, confirms the impact of holistic education on the development of religious character and academic performance (Putra et al., 2022).

Further studies support the integration of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) models into the Islamic education curriculum. The ASSURE model proposed by Malik et al. outlines a structured framework that promotes effective learning experiences through the strategic use of media and technology. Such frameworks align with the contemporary demands of students and the broader educational landscape in which technology plays a significant role (Malik et al., 2023).

Additionally, the contextual factors affecting student engagement during religious education are explored in the work of Naima et al. By identifying supporting and inhibiting factors in the social learning environment, their study highlights the importance of adapting education to meet the diverse needs of students, thereby creating a more inclusive educational experience (Naima et al., 2024).

Finally, the relevance of global influences on the Madrasah curriculum is increasingly felt. Beribe (2023) discusses the impact of globalization, indicating that it pushes Madrasah curricula to integrate global knowledge while remaining rooted in Islamic teachings. Striking this balance is crucial for preparing students to navigate the complexities of modern society (B. Beribe, 2023). Overall, the Madrasah education landscape is evolving toward active contextual-based learning methodologies that leverage digital tools and collaborative strategies. The integration of various teaching methods, driven by teacher development and contextual awareness, shows promising results in enhancing student engagement and educational outcomes.

This article employs a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena occurring in the field by offering insights into the experiences and perspectives of the participants. This qualitative study focuses on collecting written and verbal descriptive data that reveals individuals'

behaviors, views, and experiences in relevant contexts. The research type used is field research, where the researcher is directly involved in the learning environment, observing and immersing in the processes as they unfold. This approach allows the researcher to obtain more authentic and in-depth data regarding the implementation of active contextual-based learning strategies at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Pontianak.

The study was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Pontianak, accredited with an A rating, located on Jalan Ahmad Yani, Pontianak. This school was chosen due to its strong reputation and recognition as one of the preferred Madrasah Aliyah institutions in the city. The research subjects consisted of 29 twelfth-grade students aged between 15 and 18 years, all of whom are Muslim. This population was selected because they are undergoing intensive learning in their final years of study, and their experiences are relevant for providing insights into the implementation of active contextual-based learning in the Aqidah Akhlak subject.

The technique used to collect data was direct observation. In this observation, the researcher was actively involved in the learning process to observe the implementation of three types of active learning strategies (Sukmadinata, 2005). The researcher not only acted as an observer but also as a facilitator, guiding students in applying these teaching strategies. In addition to observation, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the students involved in the study. These interviews were conducted face-to-face and followed up with communication via WhatsApp to ensure the data collected was comprehensive and no information was missed. The interviews aimed to delve deeper into the experiences, perceptions, and challenges students faced while engaging in active contextual-based learning.

In data analysis, the researcher focused on how the material in the Aqidah Akhlak subject could be contextualized with real-life societal issues through the application of active learning strategies. The researcher hoped that implementing active contextual-based learning would create a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment, encouraging students to think critically and creatively. Effective learning was expected to not only help students grasp the concepts of the material but also facilitate their connection of what they learned to real-life situations, allowing them to apply it in their everyday lives.

Data analysis was conducted through systematic steps, starting with data condensation, where the researcher selected and summarized relevant data from interviews and observations. The second step was data presentation, where the selected data was organized in a structured manner for ease of understanding. Finally, conclusions were drawn, and verification was conducted to identify relevant patterns and test the validity of the findings based on existing theories. Data analysis was carried out descriptively and linked to broader contexts, as well as relevant theories, to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness and challenges of applying active contextual-based learning strategies (Sugiyono, 2013).

THE IMPORTANCE OF AQIDAH AND AKHLAQ EDUCATION FOR MADRASAH ALIYAH STUDENTS

Aqidah and akhlaq education are essential components of Islamic religious education. They aim to shape students into individuals who are faithful, morally upright, and capable of applying Islamic teachings in their daily lives. This subject is not only about teaching the principles of faith and morality but also about instilling moral values that will guide students in living their lives responsibly and with goodness.

In Arabic, *aqidah* refers to belief or conviction. In Islam, *aqidah* is the core of faith, encompassing belief in all the teachings found in the Qur'an and Hadith. It forms the fundamental basis that determines the direction of a Muslim's life. Islamic *aqidah* is the belief that is accepted and affirmed in the heart of a person. By studying *aqidah*, students are expected not only to understand Islamic teachings but also to internalize these values in their lives, making them a guide that leads to goodness in both this world and the hereafter.

Meanwhile, *akhlaq* is closely related to one's behavior and morality. *Akhlaq* is the inner disposition that encourages a person to act in accordance with the values within their soul rather than based solely on rational or intellectual considerations. Good *akhlaq* does not occur spontaneously; it requires three stages: the state of the heart, the maturity of the soul, and actual deeds. This process results in good habits that eventually become a person's character.

The primary goal of teaching *aqidah* and *akhlaq* is to cultivate strong faith and good character in students. This is achieved through providing understanding, nurturing, internalization, and practical application of Islamic teachings related to belief in Allah SWT. Students are expected not only to comprehend theory but also to implement these values in their daily lives. This education helps them become individuals who are faithful, pious and possess good character, which is in line with Islamic teachings. (Syarifuddin et al., 2014)

The teaching of *aqidah* and *akhlaq* plays a crucial role in character formation. To foster good *akhlaq*, an individual must internalize moral values in their heart and mind, which will then influence their soul and everyday actions. In this regard, the environment and habits also play a significant role in shaping a person's *akhlaq*. Therefore, moral education in schools must include efforts to build students' moral awareness, enabling them to distinguish between good and bad actions, as well as understand the reasons behind the permissibility or prohibition of certain actions according to Islamic teachings.

Furthermore, it is essential to understand that the teaching of *aqidah* and *akhlaq* does not solely focus on theological or theoretical aspects. This education must also encompass social and humanitarian dimensions, allowing students to comprehend and apply Islamic teachings in their social lives. Thus, *aqidah* and *akhlaq* education should not only address theological aspects but also pay attention to the socio-humanitarian dimension, focusing on how students interact with others and their surrounding environment.

The teaching of *aqidah* and *akhlaq* aims to form attitudes, primarily in the affective domain, which stems from students' understanding and experiences of the moral values taught in Islam. Therefore, the goal of this education is for students not only to grasp the concepts of *akhlaq* but also to understand the positive impact of virtuous character and the negative consequences of despicable character. With a deep understanding, students are expected to implement these values in their lives, both in personal and social contexts.

Overall, *aqidah* and *akhlaq* education are not only essential for shaping students with a strong belief in Allah but also for developing them into individuals who possess noble character, can distinguish between good and bad actions, and understand their social implications. Through this education, students are expected to lead a more meaningful and beneficial life for themselves, their families, and society.

CONTEXTUAL AND ACTIVE LEARNING FOR MILLENNIAL STUDENTS

The millennial generation consists of individuals born between 1982 and 2002 and is known as "digital natives." They grew up amidst the rapid development of digital technology, which connects them to various technology-based devices. Their existence is inseparable from technological advancements that have transformed the way they learn and interact with the world (Prensky, 2001).

The characteristics of millennials are heavily influenced by their vast access to technology, the internet, and social media. Unlike previous generations, they have the ability to quickly and widely access information and are more reliant on technology to meet their needs. They also prefer using gadgets and social media over traditional activities like reading conventional books.

However, despite their impressive technological skills, millennials also face several challenges. One such challenge is their dependence on gadgets, which can lead to addiction, difficulties in maintaining focus while learning, emotional disturbances, and social issues such as promiscuity and pornography (Munir, 2019). This indicates that, although millennials are more adept at using technology, they require a different approach to learning compared to previous generations.

Millennials are more inclined to trust information from user-generated content, prefer using mobile phones over television, and exhibit high levels of disloyalty to institutions. Nevertheless, they remain effective workers and are highly creative. These characteristics suggest that they prefer to share and obtain information through digital technology and tend to multitask in their daily activities (Hidayat, 2018).

One major change in the learning habits of millennials is the decline in their ability to focus. Marc Prensky argues that what has changed is not the attention span of millennial students but their tolerance for and need for information. They prefer learning in a more interactive and practical manner that allows them to actively contribute to the learning process, rather than passively receiving information (Prensky, 2001).

To address this, more contextual and active learning methods have become crucial. Contextual learning, for example, encourages students to relate the material they are learning to real-life situations. This approach makes it easier for students to apply the knowledge they acquire in their everyday lives, making the learning experience more meaningful. In contextual learning, students are not only required to memorize information but are also encouraged to understand and apply the material in their own lives.

Contextual learning involves activating prior knowledge, acquiring new knowledge deductively, and connecting that knowledge to daily life. The goal of this approach is for students to not only understand theory but also practice it within their social contexts. Additionally, contextual learning encourages students to think critically and reflectively, enabling them to use the knowledge they gain to solve real-life problems.

Active learning strategies are also highly relevant for millennial students. Active learning places students at the center of the learning process, where they are expected to think critically, analyze ideas, and solve the problems they encounter. In this approach, the learning process focuses more on student activities that involve interaction and collaboration with both peers and instructors (Silberman, 2009).

Active learning is characterized by an emphasis on developing analytical and critical thinking skills. In this process, students do not merely listen to information but engage in activities related to the material being taught. This makes learning more enjoyable and engaging for millennial students, who prefer activities that involve direct

thinking and action. Students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process and receive timely and constructive feedback.

By using contextual and active learning methods, millennial students can experience more meaningful learning. The focus shifts from simply mastering content to developing both social and cognitive skills. Learning that connects knowledge to real-life situations and allows students to engage directly in the learning process is highly suitable for supporting the critical and creative thinking abilities of millennial students, which are essential in today's digital era.

In conclusion, contextual and active learning are two highly relevant approaches for millennial students. These methods accommodate their learning needs, which are more experience-oriented, application-driven, and engagement-based. With these approaches, students not only master content but also acquire skills that can be applied in their daily lives, preparing them to face the increasingly complex challenges of the future.

CONTEXTUAL AND ACTIVE LEARNING FOR STUDENTS: INNOVATION IN AQIDAH AND AKHLAK EDUCATION AT MAN 2 PONTIANAK

The Aqidah and Akhlak education for 12th-grade students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 2 Pontianak employs an innovative approach aimed at shaping students who not only understand fundamental religious concepts but are also able to apply them in their daily lives. One of the topics covered in this curriculum is "the importance of competing in goodness (fastabiq al khairat), optimism, and dynamism." In this learning process, the teacher uses a combination of three active learning strategies: learning by poster, interactive lecturing, and information search. The primary goal of these strategies is to actively engage students at each stage of the lesson, ensuring that they are not passively listening to lectures but are instead thinking critically, creatively, and applicably.

The first strategy used is interactive lecturing, where the teacher delivers an interactive lecture on the meaning and wisdom of the behavior of fastabiq al khairat. In this session, students are encouraged to discuss the positive impact of competing in goodness, as well as the importance of maintaining an optimistic and dynamic attitude. After providing an explanation, the teacher opens a question-and-answer session to ensure students' understanding and to address any questions that arise. This helps students connect the theory to real-life situations.

After the interactive session, the teacher moves on to the learning by poster strategy, in which students work together in groups. During this phase, students are asked to create posters that depict an optimistic and dynamic attitude or deliver a motivational message about fastabiq al khairat. This poster creation activity encourages student creativity and gives them the opportunity to visually express their understanding. In this way, learning becomes more engaging, focusing not only on cognitive aspects but also on the development of creative skills.

Following the poster creation, students proceed to the information search phase, where they are given the freedom to seek additional information using digital devices such as smartphones or computers. Students can access various applications like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google, and YouTube to enrich their knowledge on the subject being studied. This strategy trains students to independently access and verify information, a crucial skill in the digital era.

In the next stage, each group is given the opportunity to present the posters they have created. During the presentation, students not only showcase their creativity in

designing the posters but also explain the meaning behind the images they have chosen. Other students are allowed to evaluate, ask questions, and provide constructive feedback. This creates a more interactive learning process, where students learn from each other and enrich their understanding collectively.

Peer assessments also include a psychomotor aspect, where students are asked to evaluate the creativity of the posters and the quality of material delivery during presentations. Additionally, the teacher provides comments and feedback on the learning activities. Praise is given for students' hard work, while constructive input is provided to improve the quality of future lessons. This fosters a learning environment that supports the development of students' skills across various domains not only in terms of knowledge but also in skills and attitudes.

Observations show that the combination of these three active learning strategies effectively addresses the challenges teachers face in capturing students' attention, particularly as many students struggle to focus on the material. By employing a variety of teaching strategies, the teacher succeeds in maintaining students' enthusiasm for learning and keeping their focus throughout the two-hour lesson (2 x 45 minutes). The collaboration of these three strategies proves to be an excellent solution for creating an active and dynamic learning atmosphere.

However, despite the effectiveness of the lesson, the teacher faces the challenge of ensuring that students not only understand the material at a cognitive level but can also apply the knowledge they have acquired in real life. This requires a deeper approach, where students are not only knowledgeable about what is taught but are also able to demonstrate relevant skills through actions (psychomotor) and connect what they learn to their everyday lives (affective).

Given the limited time available, the teacher must prioritize which aspects to emphasize during the learning process. All three domains of learning cognitive, psychomotor, and affective must be carefully attended to. In Aqidah and Akhlak education, the ultimate goal is to shape students with noble character, so teachers must ensure that, in addition to understanding the material, students are able to implement it in their daily lives.

Contextual learning plays a significant role in achieving this objective. As demonstrated by the diagram linking contextual learning to active learning, teachers must ensure that students not only understand the material cognitively but also develop practical skills (psychomotor) and appropriate attitudes (affective). Contextual Aqidah and Akhlak education allows students to relate the knowledge they gain to their social lives outside the classroom and apply these values in their everyday behavior.

In this context, teachers must provide concrete examples of how the behaviors taught can be applied in real life. Teachers should not only teach theory but also demonstrate how these values can function and bring significant benefits to students' lives. Learning based on understanding and real-life application helps students realize that learning is not just about memorizing but about shaping positive behavior that will benefit their lives.

CONCLUSION

The research on Aqidah and Akhlak education at MAN 2 Pontianak demonstrates that combining three active learning strategies, learning by poster, interactive lecturing, and information search, has proven effective in increasing student engagement. Students understand the material cognitively and develop practical skills and positive attitudes by

applying the values taught in their daily lives. Teachers have successfully addressed the challenge of maintaining student focus, especially given that most students are from the millennial generation, by using diverse strategies and creating an active and dynamic learning atmosphere.

The implementation of interactive lecturing provides a strong foundation for students' understanding of Aqidah and Akhlak topics, such as the importance of competing in goodness (*fastabiq al khairat*), optimism, and dynamism. The question-and-answer sessions and discussions during this phase strengthen the connection between theory and practice, helping students relate what they learn to real life. Moreover, the learning by poster strategy encourages students to express their understanding visually and creatively, while the information search phase enriches their knowledge with additional, relevant information, expanding their thinking horizons.

Observations also indicate that peer assessments are an important part of this process. Students provide feedback and evaluate the creativity and quality of their peers' presentations, encouraging greater involvement in the learning process. Teachers, as facilitators, provide constructive feedback to improve the quality of future learning. However, while this combination of strategies successfully maintains student engagement, the challenge remains to ensure that students not only understand the material theoretically but can also apply it in their lives.

Based on the findings, effective learning depends not only on the techniques or strategies used but also on how well these strategies foster understanding and skills that can be applied in real life. In the context of Aqidah and Akhlak education, students need to not only understand the concepts of goodness and noble character but also be able to demonstrate these behaviors in their everyday lives. Therefore, learning strategies that integrate cognitive, psychomotor, and affective elements are key to achieving this goal.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that contextual and active learning has a profound impact on student development, particularly in internalizing the values of Aqidah and Akhlak. Learning that combines theory with practice and links the material to real life can shape students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess good character and the ability to act according to the moral values taught. This research contributes to the understanding of the importance of a holistic approach in education to create a high-quality generation in both knowledge and behavior.

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