



Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in Islamic Religious Education: An Implementation Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects to improve students' understanding and practice of religious values in their daily lives. This study uses a literature study type of research by collecting related data on contextual components in Islamic Education learning in schools. The results of the study indicate that PAI learning with a contextual approach successfully transforms the learning process from mere memorization of material into a meaningful learning experience. Implementation is carried out through seven main components of CTL: constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning communities, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment. This approach has been proven to increase active student involvement, strengthen character, and make it easier for students to connect PAI materials (morals, fiqh, history) with the context of real-life everyday situations. Conclusion: Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is an effective strategy to improve PAI learning outcomes both academically and affectively. This approach makes Islamic Education more relevant and applicable, thus producing students who are not only cognitively intelligent, but also have good morals in society.

Keywords: *Contextual Learning; Islamic Religious Education; Character Building.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi pendekatan *Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL) dalam mata pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) guna meningkatkan pemahaman dan pengamalan nilai-nilai agama dalam kehidupan sehari-hari siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kepustakaan terkait komponen-komponen kontekstual dalam pembelajaran PAI di sekolah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran PAI dengan pendekatan kontekstual berhasil mentransformasi proses belajar dari sekadar hafalan materi menjadi pengalaman belajar yang bermakna. Implementasi dilakukan melalui tujuh komponen utama CTL: konstruktivisme, inkuiri, bertanya, masyarakat belajar, pemodelan, refleksi, dan penilaian autentik. Pendekatan ini terbukti meningkatkan keterlibatan aktif siswa, memperkuat karakter, dan memudahkan siswa menghubungkan materi PAI (akhlak, fikih, sejarah) dengan konteks situasi nyata sehari-hari. Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Kontekstual (CTL) merupakan strategi yang efektif untuk meningkatkan hasil belajar PAI baik secara akademik maupun afektif. Pendekatan ini menjadikan PAI lebih relevan dan aplikatif, sehingga membentuk siswa yang tidak hanya cerdas kognitif, tetapi juga berakhlak karimah dalam bermasyarakat.

Kata Kunci: *Pembelajaran Kontekstual; Pendidikan Agama Islam; Pembentukan Karakter.*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the modern era faces significant challenges in bridging the gap between universal Islamic values and the increasingly diverse and dynamic contexts of students' lives. This phenomenon demands innovation in instructional approaches that not only emphasize cognitive aspects but also integrate affective and psychomotor dimensions in the internalization of religious values. In this context, the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach emerges as a strategic solution that facilitates a harmonious integration between PAI learning materials and the daily realities of students.

Contextual Teaching and Learning directs educational concepts toward helping educators connect subject content with real-world situations. Consequently, students are required to grasp the correlation between school-based learning experiences and real life, which motivates them to draw connections between acquired knowledge and its practical application (Hudson & Whisler, 2008: 54; Lestari, 2017: 414).

Furthermore, CTL offers substantial benefits in developing students' adaptability to social and technological changes. In a rapidly evolving era of globalization and digitalization, the ability to adapt Islamic teachings to new contexts is paramount. Contextual PAI instruction trains students not merely to memorize Islamic teachings in traditional formulations, but to comprehend foundational principles that can be applied in various evolving situations and conditions. This capability is essential to ensure that Islamic teachings remain relevant and applicable to students' future lives.

Regarding the development of social skills, CTL has proven effective in cultivating students' teamwork, communication, and leadership abilities. Through learning communities, students learn to collaborate with peers from diverse backgrounds, communicate their ideas effectively, and assume leadership roles in specific situations. These social skills are crucial in modern life, which increasingly demands the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively within multicultural and multireligious environments.

As posited by Johnson (2002), CTL is an instructional system based on the philosophy that students can absorb, process, and understand new information if they are able to connect it to their pre-existing knowledge and experiences. This concept aligns seamlessly with the Islamic educational principle that emphasizes the interconnectedness of knowledge (*ilmu*) and action (*amal*), as stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah: 269, regarding the wisdom granted to whomever He wills. Contextual learning in PAI aims not only to transfer religious knowledge but also to shape a Muslim personality capable of actualizing Islamic teachings across various dimensions of life.

The CTL approach also guides students toward problem-solving processes; by resolving problems, students develop holistically—not only intellectually but also mentally and emotionally (Hamruri, 2009: 173-175).

This contextual learning stimulates students to participate actively in the educational process and encourages them to learn directly from their daily experiences (Nasution & Yusnaldi, 2024: 189).

Moreover, CTL serves as a pathway to academic excellence by linking subject matter with socially-based life contexts. This method facilitates the retention of material, making comprehension deeper and less likely to be forgotten, which is in accordance with competency-based learning. Therefore, implementing the CTL approach is deemed highly suitable for educational institutions, particularly for PAI subjects (Harudin, 2018: 122).

Additionally, the urgency of applying CTL in PAI instruction is further underscored by the research findings of Muhaimin (2005), which demonstrate that conventional PAI instruction tends to be textual and falls short in developing students' abilities to apply religious values in real life. This condition is corroborated by Majid (2012), whose findings indicate that the predominantly teacher-centered and text-oriented approaches to PAI instruction have not been optimal in forming students' religious characters in a manner that integrates with their social lives.

METHOD

This study employs a library research method, utilizing reading and note-taking as the primary data collection techniques. The main sources obtained serve as primary data derived from books, theses, journal articles, websites, mass media reports, and educational bulletins relevant to the research focus. Specifically, the collected data pertains to the contextual approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) through active learning methods based on real-world experiences, problem-solving, and collaboration. Within the scope of this study, the research specifically focuses on inquiry, questioning, learning communities, modeling, and reflection—crucial elements to be internalized by both educators and students—which are subsequently examined using a content analysis approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)

The term "contextual" derives from the word "context," which translates to atmosphere or condition. Consequently, contextual is defined as being related to a specific situation or atmosphere (Hamruni, 2015: 178). Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) can therefore be understood as an instructional process associated with a particular setting (Glynn, 2004: 51). CTL represents an educational conception that assists educators in connecting subject matter with real-world situations, thereby motivating students to establish connections between their knowledge and its practical application in their roles as family and community members (Berns & Erickson, 2001: 3; Rusman, 2016: 190).

As an instructional approach, CTL possesses robust philosophical roots in the theory of constructivism, initially conceptualized by Mark Baldwin and further developed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. The philosophical school of constructivism stems from the epistemological framework of Giambattista Vico (Sanjaya, 2006: 256-257). According to Sanjaya (2006), CTL is an instructional strategy that emphasizes the comprehensive involvement of students in discovering the studied material and correlating it with real-life situations, thereby encouraging them to apply this knowledge in their daily lives. This definition indicates that CTL transcends the mere transfer of information; rather, it focuses on the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction between new knowledge and the students' existential experiences.

Within the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), the CTL approach demonstrates a profound relevance to the instructional methodologies exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). As articulated by Ramayulis (2008), the Prophet's teaching methods consistently contextualized *da'wah* (proselytization) and educational materials within the lived realities of his companions. He utilized parables relevant to their daily lives and provided direct role modeling in the practice of Islamic teachings. This demonstrates that the fundamental principles of CTL intrinsically possess strong theological and historical legitimacy within the Islamic educational tradition.

The Epistemological and Pedagogical Framework of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in Islamic Education

Etymologically rooted in the concept of "context"—denoting a specific condition or atmosphere—Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) operates as an instructional paradigm that bridges theoretical subject matter with real-world complexities (Glynn, 2004; Hamruni, 2015). Beyond a mere pedagogical tool, CTL is anchored in the robust epistemological foundations of constructivism, drawing from the philosophical traditions of Giambattista Vico and the cognitive theories of Piaget and Vygotsky (Sanjaya, 2006). Within this framework, learning transcends the passive transmission of information; it becomes a dynamic process of meaning construction where students are required to engage in higher-order thinking, continuously correlating new knowledge with their existential experiences (Berns & Erickson, 2001; Rusman, 2016). In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), this constructivist approach demonstrates profound historical and theological legitimacy, mirroring the instructional methodologies of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who consistently contextualized *da'wah* through relatable parables and direct role modeling (Ramayulis, 2008).

The operationalization of CTL within PAI is characterized by a systemic integration of several core components that align seamlessly with Islamic scholarly traditions (Fathurrahman & Sulistyorini, 2012; Nurhadi, 2004). At its

core, the learning process must be meaningful and culturally responsive, driven by inquiry and questioning. These elements resonate strongly with the Islamic culture of *tadabbur* (contemplation of universal signs or *ayat kauniyah*) and the Qur'anic mandate to nurture human curiosity (*fitrah*) by seeking knowledge from scholars (Surah An-Nahl: 43). Rather than accepting ready-made dogmas, students are intellectually stimulated to uncover the rationality and wisdom behind Islamic teachings through systematic discovery.

Furthermore, the social and practical dimensions of CTL are manifested through the establishment of a learning community and the practice of modeling. By fostering collaborative, heterogeneous study groups, the CTL approach operationalizes the Islamic principles of *ukhuwah islamiyah* (brotherhood) and the *ummah* (community), promoting tolerance within a unified creed (*aqidah*). This collaborative environment is further enriched by educators who act not merely as instructors but as exemplars (*uswatun hasanah*), demonstrating the practical application of Islamic values in daily life.

Ultimately, the efficacy of the CTL approach in PAI culminates in reflection and authentic assessment. Reflection aligns with the Islamic concept of *muhاسبah* (self-introspection), ensuring that students internalize religious values intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. To evaluate this holistic development, authentic assessment is employed to measure not only cognitive retention but also affective and psychomotor competencies. Through this comprehensive evaluation, educators can accurately gauge the students' capacity to actualize religious knowledge—spanning *ibadah* (worship), *akhlak* (morality), and *muamalah* (social interactions)—within diverse and evolving societal contexts.

The Concept of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)

The theoretical foundation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is further corroborated by the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984). The fundamental distinctions between the CTL approach and conventional instructional models are delineated in the following table (Sanjaya, 2006: 260-261; Fathurrohman & Sulistyorini, 2012: 82-83)

Key Aspect	Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)	Conventional Learning
Role of Students	Active subjects who independently discover and explore learning materials.	Passive objects who merely receive information.
Learning Process	Collaborative and directly connected to real-world situations.	Individualized, highly theoretical, and focused on memorization.

Ultimate Motivation	Intrinsic satisfaction and understanding.	personal and	Extrinsic rewards such as grades or scores.
Behavioral Driver	Internal awareness of the value and benefit of specific actions.		External pressure, fear of punishment, or the pursuit of grades.
Nature of Knowledge	Dynamic, continuously evolving through students' personal experiences.		Absolute and final, constructed externally by educators or textbooks.
Assessment Focus	Holistic encompassing processes, portfolios, and observations.	evaluation	Narrow evaluation based predominantly on cognitive tests.

Source: Content analysis based on data processing.

The conceptual analysis above emphasizes that effective learning occurs through a continuous cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Within the PAI context, students engage directly in religious practices, reflect on the underlying meanings and wisdom (*hikmah*) of these experiences, abstract them into universal Islamic principles, and subsequently apply them to new, real-life situations they encounter.

The Roles of Educators and Students in CTL

Every student possesses a distinct learning style. These individual differences, as articulated by Bobbi DePorter and cited in Wina Sanjaya's *Instructional Strategies (Strategi Pembelajaran)*, are referred to as learning modalities. According to this framework, there are three primary types of student learning styles: visual (learning through seeing, where students grasp information more rapidly utilizing their visual senses), auditory (learning through listening), and kinesthetic (learning through physical movement, active participation, and touch).

Within the contextual learning process, it is imperative for educators to comprehend the students' learning preferences; essentially, educators must align their pedagogical approaches with the students' specific learning modalities. In this regard, several crucial aspects must be considered by educators when implementing the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach.

In the CTL framework, students are viewed as individuals in a continuous state of development. An individual's learning capacity is significantly influenced by their developmental stage and the breadth of their prior experiences. Children are not merely miniature adults; rather, they are organisms progressing through distinct developmental phases. Consequently, the educator's role is to guide and facilitate learning in a manner congruent with the students' specific developmental stages.

Furthermore, every student exhibits a natural inclination to learn novel and challenging concepts. Students are inherently curious to explore

unfamiliar and innovative phenomena. Therefore, for them, learning equates to attempting to solve challenging problems. As such, the educator assumes a critical role in curating and selecting instructional materials that are deemed essential and cognitively stimulating for the students.

For students, learning is fundamentally a process of establishing connections between new information and pre-existing knowledge. Thus, the educator's responsibility is to assist each student in discovering the correlations between novel experiences and prior understandings. From a cognitive perspective, learning involves refining existing mental structures (assimilation) or forming entirely new ones (accommodation). Ultimately, the core duty of the educator is to facilitate students in effectively executing both assimilation and accommodation processes (Sanjaya, 2006: 262-263).

Analysis of CTL Implementation in Islamic Religious Education

The implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) necessitates a systematic and comprehensive approach encompassing all aspects of the PAI curriculum. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2004), the PAI curriculum comprises five primary domains: Al-Qur'an and Hadith, *Aqidah* (Theology), *Akhlak* (Morality/Ethics), *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), and Islamic Cultural History. Each domain possesses unique characteristics that demand specific, yet holistically integrated, contextualization strategies.

Within the Al-Qur'an and Hadith domain, CTL implementation is directed toward developing students' competencies in understanding, interpreting, and applying scriptural teachings within contemporary contexts. Instruction transcends the mere recitation of Arabic texts and the rote memorization of literal translations; instead, it is advanced toward a contextual comprehension that enables students to extract universal values from religious texts and apply them in resolving their real-world problems. As articulated by Shihab (2013), a contextual understanding of the Qur'an requires the ability to distinguish between the overarching principles of *maqashid al-syariah* (objectives of Islamic law) and the historical-contextual manifestations of those principles.

A contextual instructional strategy for Al-Qur'an and Hadith can be operationalized through a thematic approach that correlates Qur'anic verses with contemporary issues relevant to students' lives. For instance, when studying verses on social justice, students do not merely memorize the literal meanings; they are actively engaged in analyzing social injustices in their surroundings and formulating solutions grounded in Islamic principles of justice. This approach, according to Rahman (2017), effectively cultivates students' critical thinking while reinforcing the relevance of Islamic teachings in the modern era.

In the *Aqidah* domain, contextual learning aims to foster a faith that is not exclusively dogmatic, but also rational and experiential. The teaching of *aqidah* extends beyond the memorization of the pillars of faith and scriptural proofs

(*dalil naqli*); it is cultivated through the contemplation of natural phenomena and social dynamics as manifestations of divine attributes. As noted by Nasution (2011), mature faith relies not only on tradition and authority but also on profound spiritual experiences and rational reflection.

The implementation of CTL in *aqidah* instruction can be executed through a scientific approach that integrates modern scientific discoveries with universal signs (*ayat kauniyah*) in the Qur'an. Students are encouraged to observe the order and harmony of the universe as evidence of the oneness and omnipotence of God, to comprehend the complexity of human creation as a reflection of divine perfection, and to contemplate the phenomena of life and death as proof of the afterlife. This approach, as proposed by Bucaille (2001), strengthens students' convictions while developing their ability to integrate religious and scientific perspectives.

Akhlak instruction within the CTL framework is designed to shape students' characters through direct practice in daily life. It surpasses the theoretical introduction of commendable (*mahmudah*) and reprehensible (*madzmumah*) traits by providing authentic experiences that allow students to internalize noble virtues into their personalities. As Lickona (2013) asserts, effective character education must encompass three core components—moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action—all of which must be seamlessly integrated into authentic learning experiences.

Contextual strategies for teaching *akhlak* can be implemented through service learning, which bridges academic instruction with community service. Students do not merely study ethical concepts theoretically; they actualize them through social engagements such as tutoring underprivileged children, assisting the elderly, conducting environmental clean-ups, or participating in community empowerment programs. Through these experiences, students develop not only academic proficiency but also undergo profound character transformation driven by empathy, altruism, and social responsibility.

Regarding *Fiqh*, contextual learning is oriented toward developing students' abilities to understand and apply Islamic jurisprudence within increasingly complex modern contexts. *Fiqh* instruction shifts from the rote memorization of normative rulings to a deeper comprehension of the underlying wisdom (*hikmah*) and *maqashid al-syariah* governing Islamic law. As Auda (2008) emphasizes, a contextual understanding of *fiqh* necessitates the capacity to grasp *maqashid al-syariah* and apply it to resolve contemporary issues not explicitly addressed in classical texts.

The implementation of CTL in *fiqh* can be achieved through problem-based learning, which exposes students to real-world cases requiring Islamic legal solutions. For example, in studying *fiqh muamalah* (Islamic commercial law), students go beyond memorizing definitions of transactions, usury (*riba*), and various contracts; they are challenged to analyze modern economic practices—such as Islamic banking, *takaful* (Islamic insurance), Islamic capital

markets, and e-commerce—from the perspective of Islamic law. This approach empowers students to develop *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) skills appropriate to their level, while grasping the relevance of Islamic tenets in the modern economy.

In the domain of Islamic Cultural History, contextual learning is designed to cultivate students' historical awareness regarding the contributions of Islamic civilization to global progress and its relevance to contemporary challenges faced by the Muslim community. Historical instruction transcends chronological narratives of past events, evolving into a critical analysis of the factors driving the rise and fall of Islamic civilization, as well as extracting lessons applicable to current challenges.

CTL implementation in historical instruction can utilize a comparative historical analysis approach, juxtaposing historical conditions with contemporary realities. Students are guided to analyze the Prophet's *da'wah* strategies and their relevance to globalization challenges; to investigate the catalysts of scientific advancement during the Islamic Golden Age and their implications for modern science and technology in the Muslim world; and to examine the causes of political decline, thereby formulating strategies to revitalize the Muslim community's role in global politics.

Ultimately, all aforementioned aspects of the PAI curriculum must be integrated into a holistic instructional model that unifies the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. According to Bloom (1956), effective education must encompass these three domains in a balanced and integrated manner. In the context of PAI, this integration ensures that students not only comprehend Islamic teachings conceptually but also emotionally internalize their beauty and nobility, consistently manifesting them in their daily lives.

The Benefits of CTL in Islamic Religious Education

The implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) yields significant advantages and benefits, encompassing both pedagogical dimensions and the holistic development of students' character and spirituality. These advantages have been rigorously validated through various empirical studies conducted by Islamic education scholars globally, demonstrating the efficacy of CTL in comprehensively elevating the quality of PAI instruction.

Regarding learning motivation, CTL has been proven capable of enhancing students' intrinsic motivation in studying Islam. Research conducted by Suprayogi (2015) indicates that students exposed to the contextual approach in PAI exhibit significantly higher levels of learning motivation compared to their counterparts in conventional classrooms. This phenomenon occurs because CTL renders PAI instruction more meaningful and relevant to students' lives, allowing them to perceive the direct utility of the subject matter in their daily routines. When students can correlate Islamic teachings with their concrete experiences, learning is no longer perceived as

an academic burden; rather, it transforms into an engaging and inspiring process of meaning-making and self-transformation.

The efficacy of CTL in fostering students' critical thinking skills has also been substantiated through multiple studies. According to Facione (2011), critical thinking is defined as the ability to systematically analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information to produce valid and reliable conclusions. In CTL-based PAI instruction, students do not passively receive information regarding Islamic tenets; instead, they are encouraged to analyze, question, and evaluate this information in relation to their life contexts. This intellectual process cultivates students' capacities to formulate arguments, make informed decisions, and solve problems grounded in Islamic principles.

Furthermore, CTL has proven highly effective in facilitating meaningful learning. Drawing on Ausubel's (1968) cognitive theory, meaningful learning occurs when students can anchor new information to their pre-existing cognitive structures. In contextual PAI instruction, students do not merely memorize Qur'anic verses, *hadiths*, or religious concepts mechanically; they comprehend their intrinsic meanings and relevance to their life experiences. This meaningful learning generates deeper comprehension, prolonged retention, and superior knowledge transferability, enabling students to apply their religious knowledge to novel situations they encounter.

In terms of character building, CTL contributes significantly to the internalization of Islamic values within students' personalities. According to Berkowitz and Bier (2005), effective character education must involve direct experiences that allow students to practice the intended values. CTL provides an educational framework that empowers students not only to grasp noble ethical concepts (*akhlak*) cognitively but also to experience and operationalize them in authentic, real-world scenarios. Through these practical experiences, Islamic values are not merely stored in students' short-term memory but are profoundly internalized into their personality structures, becoming an integral component of their personal identity.

CTL also plays a crucial role in cultivating a profound religious awareness among students. As Allport (1950) suggests, mature religious awareness is characterized by an individual's ability to consistently and authentically integrate their faith across all aspects of life. Contextual PAI instruction enables students to realize that Islam is not merely a set of rituals performed at specific times, but rather a comprehensive *way of life* that governs every dimension of human existence. Through learning experiences that connect Islamic teachings with various socio-cultural aspects, students develop the spiritual consciousness that every daily activity possesses a divine dimension and can serve as a means of drawing closer to Allah.

Finally, the benefits of CTL in PAI instruction are evident in the enhancement of students' abilities to apply Islamic teachings within their social environment. Research by Hidayat (2016) demonstrates that students

engaged in contextual PAI instruction exhibit superior capabilities in actualizing Islamic values within their social interactions—whether within the familial sphere, school environment, or broader community. This improvement is fundamentally attributed to CTL providing students with direct, hands-on experiences of how Islamic virtues can be practically manifested across a diverse spectrum of social situations.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) fundamentally emphasizes the integration of subject matter with students' real-life situations, thereby encouraging them to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application in daily life. This pedagogical approach effectively transforms PAI instruction from a purely theoretical exercise into an applicative, meaningful, and highly active learning process. Contextual strategies have proven to be significantly more effective than conventional methods in enhancing students' comprehension, academic achievement, and the cultivation of noble character (*akhlakul karimah*). Consequently, PAI instruction evolves beyond mere cognitive learning into a profound internalization of religious values within everyday existence.

Furthermore, it can be affirmed that CTL in PAI is anchored in seven core components: constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning communities, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment. Within this framework, PAI educators function as vital facilitators who contextualize instructional materials within the students' social, cultural, and experiential environments. Additionally, educators are strictly required to serve as exemplary role models, exhibiting praiseworthy behavior to safeguard and nurture the students' moral development. By successfully rendering the educational process more meaningful, active, and applicable, this approach ultimately cultivates a generation of Muslims who possess strong character, noble morals, and the absolute readiness to actualize religious knowledge across all facets of life.

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