Transforming Learning in Primary Schools: The Effectiveness of Contextual Approaches in Improving Student Motivation and Comprehension

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Keywords:	Abstract
Teacher, Contextual Learning, Students, Elementary School	*This research is motivated by several events that show that students are less actively involved in the learning process and do not really understand the material being taught. Students who cannot understand the material being taught can cause students to be less motivated to learn. Therefore, the teacher must choose a suitable model for overcoming these problems. To respond to these problems, research is carried out which aims to increase student motivation and students' ability to understand the material. The method used in this research is qualitative research/literature study or library research, which takes reading sources from secondary data collected. The results of this study indicate that the application of contextual learning models in elementary schools can improve students' ability to understand the material because, in contextual learning, students relate the material to their surrounding environment or also the experience of students so that students can more easily gain an understanding of the material and students are also more motivated by fun learning than that students can be active in class. This study concludes that applying contextual learning models can improve students' ability to understand material through a learning process that suits students' needs.*
Kata Kunci: Guru, Pembelajaran Kontekstual, Siswa Sekolah Dasar	Penelitian ini dilatar belakangi oleh beberapa kejadian yang menunjukkan bahwasannya di dalam kegiatan pembelajaran peserta didik kurang berpartisipasi secara aktif dan juga tidak terlalu memahami materi yang diajarkan. Peserta didik yang tidak terlalu memahami materi dapat menyebabkan peserta didik kurang termotivasi untuk belajar, sehingga guru harus memilih model apa yang dirasa cocok untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut, untuk menanggapi masalah tersebut dilakukan penelitian yang bertujuan guna meningkatkan motivasi siswa dan kemampuan siswa dalam memahami materi. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu metode penelitian kualitatif/studi literatur atau penelitian kepustakaan dengan mengambil sumber bacaan dari data sekunder yang dikumpulkan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan model pembelajaran kontekstual di sekolah dasar dapat meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam memahami materi karena dalam pembelajaran kontekstual siswa

mengaitkan materi dengan lingkungan sekitar mereka atau juga pengalaman dari siswa, sehingga siswa dapat lebih dengan mudah mendapatkan pemahaman mengenai materi dan siswa juga lebih termotivasi dengan pembelajaran yang menyenangkan dari itu siswa dapat aktif di kelas. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah penerapan model pembelajaran kontekstual dapat meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam memahami materi melalui proses pembelajaran yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan siswa.

1. Introduction

Learning in the education process at school is one of the most important aspects (Faizah & Kamal, 2024). Learning activities are education-based activities where there is interaction between learners and educators to achieve goals. In learning activities is an expectation that is always expected from educators. However, this is often a complex challenge because learners are individuals with a diversity of characteristics and social beings with diverse backgrounds. These differences include intellectual, psychological, and biological. The success or failure of learning is determined by the approach taken by educators to their students (Wahyuni et al., 2024).

At the learning stage, determining the method, model, and approach is very important, because the running of a lesson is also supported by this, without a method, model, or approach, as a result, students will have difficulty mastering the material, so the desired competencies cannot be achieved (Hasibuan et al., 2024). In learning, teachers are free to determine the methods to be used, not just the lecture method often used in many schools. In the learning process, what is expected is how the teaching material is conveyed thoroughly and can be mastered by students (Hutamy & Zhafirah, 2024). However, this cannot be realized quickly because each student has diverse characteristics and abilities that are not the same. Some students like visual, audiovisual, or kinesthetic learning. Teachers must design learning strategies tailored to their needs (Sari & Wahyudi, 2024).

In reality, many teachers still use conventional teaching; they have a more dominant role than students, who only listen to explanations and do tasks from educators. As a result, students do not experience an effective learning process. According to (Putri et al., 2024), teachers cannot teach students well if they do not understand their world. Thus, educators must apply approaches that can develop students' interests and encourage students to be actively involved in teaching to ensure that students are engaged in the teaching process. Contextual learning is one method that can help educators link learning materials with the real world.

Contextual approach (CTL) is an approach that encourages the brain to make shapes that show meaning (Nasution & Yusnaldi, 2024). CTL is a series of teachings that fit with the brain because it links academic changes to the context of students' real lives. Linking the subject matter to

everyday experiences, students learn to memorize information and understand how the knowledge can be applied in real situations. This helps students see the relevance of their learning, which can increase their motivation and interest in learning.

Contextual learning method (CTL) is a teaching method that emphasizes student involvement and relates subject matter to real-life situations. The contextual approach also emphasizes student participation and relates the subject matter through their lives (Suhartoyo et al., 2020). In addition, research that has been carried out found that students, when learning with contextual learning, do not merely understand the material but also understand the purpose and usefulness of the material in everyday coverage. Contextual learning also provides cognitive value to students, such as their ability to learn independently and become more confident when participating in learning activities.

In addition, research that has been conducted found that students, when learning with contextual learning, do not merely understand the material but also understand the purpose and usefulness of the material in their daily scope. Contextual learning also provides cognitive value to students, such as their ability to learn independently and become more confident when participating in learning activities (Penebangan et al., 2024). Thus, students are not only recipients of information but also active learners who can relate new knowledge to their experiences and existing knowledge.

Applying contextual approaches in learning can help students develop critical and creative thinking skills. When students face real problems that require solutions, they are encouraged to analyze the situation, evaluate various alternatives, and formulate appropriate solutions (Penebangan et al., 2024). This process enhances their analytical abilities and equips them with skills much needed in work and everyday life. CTL focuses not only on academic achievement but also on developing students' character and life skills.

Educators must understand that implementing a contextual approach requires careful planning and a deep understanding of students' needs and characteristics (Fitriyani et al., 2024). Teachers must design relevant and engaging learning activities and create an environment that supports exploration and collaboration. Through the right approach, CTL can be a very effective tool in improving the quality of education and preparing students to face future challenges. Through the application of CTL, it is expected that students not only become academically intelligent individuals but can also adapt and contribute positively to society (Daud, 2021).

The application of the contextual approach to teaching activities is essential because, in teaching activities, students are expected to be able to be more active. Therefore, student involvement can be supported through a contextual approach; students can also be skilled and think critically in dealing with real-life problems (Susanto et al., 2024). Students can capture

the material the teacher explains more efficiently through this contextual approach. This approach directs teachers and students to make the context of the environment and daily life the primary material in the learning process (Fauzi et al., 2023). This research aims to understand the application of contextual learning in primary schools in developing students' understanding of the material, as well as discussing this approach effectively in classroom teaching activities to create an active and interactive learning environment and support the achievement of student learning outcomes.

2. Methods

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods with data collection techniques through literature review. The literature review was conducted by analyzing data from various reference sources, such as books, articles, and journals relevant to the research focus on improving students' understanding of learning materials (Sugiyono, 2016). This review limited the literature to sources published between 2014 and 2024, thus ensuring the relevance of the data to the current educational context. The literature selection process involved reading the documents' abstracts and content to determine the theme's significance, the theory's accuracy, and the sources' credibility. Data were analyzed using three main steps: (1) data reduction, i.e. selecting and summarizing relevant information from the literature; (2) data presentation in the form of tables or narratives to facilitate interpretation; and (3) conclusion drawing based on the relationship between findings. The research focused on elementary school learning strategies, primarily contextual learning models. The analysis results are presented narratively to explain critically and structurally how this learning model can improve students' understanding. This research does not involve field data but emphasizes the analysis of relevant and credible literature as the basis for conclusions.

3. Result and Discussion

Contextual learning, often referred to as CTL *(Contextual Teaching and Learning)*, is a teaching approach in which ideas are taught in the context of real life so that students can understand concepts and understand their relationship in their use in real life (El-Freihat & Al-Shbeil, 2021). Contextual learning integrates subject matter with the context of real life so that students can understand and apply their understanding and expertise to various situations (Muhartini et al., 2023). Contextual learning is influenced by the philosophy of constructivism proposed by Mark Baldwin and refined by Jean Piaget and Vygotsky. This school argues that learning is a process of developing knowledge through experience rather than just memorizing things. Knowledge does not come from others, such as teachers, but from reconstructing each person's self. In teaching, one of the causes that often prevents students from understanding the material is the lack of diversity from the teacher when explaining the material, so teaching becomes monotonous and boring (Suhandi & Kurniasri, 2019).

Contextual learning refers to the idea that children will learn better if their learning environment is scientifically designed. In other words, learning will be more significant if children "work" and "experience" what they learn rather than "know" it. Teachers should pay special attention to how children understand what they learn. , the strategies used are more important than the learning outcomes (Aminah et al., 2022).

CTL is an educational method that aims to help students understand the meaning of subject matter by relating it to their personal, social, and cultural environment (Nur et al., 2024). Through contextual learning, students understand the course, the learning objectives, and how the material functions in their daily environment (Suhartoyo et al., 2020). This strategy should match students' abilities, enable them to learn more and assist learners in increasing their interest in learning.

In contextual learning, some things must be understood according to the concept of learning, namely:

a) Contextual learning emphasizes student participation in learning, one of which is that students can learn through authentic experiences. Through learning activities, students are focused on the results and the process by which they understand the material being studied so that they can work independently without cheating their friends.

b) Contextual learning also asks students to connect the application of learning to the real world; this situation aims to make students better able to store material in their memory related to the material that has been discovered so that students will not easily forget after changing the material.

c) The contextual approach motivates students to be able to apply it in reality, meaning that students are not able to understand the material but can use it in their real lives.

Menurut (Lipiah et al., 2022) contextual learning (CTL) is based on seven principles (components) which are the basis for its implementation, namely:

a) Constructivism, the philosophical principle of the contextual approach, argues that humans gradually form knowledge, and the results can be expanded within a limited context. Knowledge cannot be defined as a collection of information, concepts or principles that can be remembered. Through life experiences, people must acquire knowledge and meaning. When students can create a Venn diagram by grouping examples of each set, it is an example of constructivism that can be used in mathematics learning. This allows students to construct their knowledge to distinguish slices and joins.

b) Inquiry Contextual-based learning involves a process of discovery by students. Students are expected not only to remember facts but also to discover their knowledge and skills. The teacher must design activities that support the discovery process. Any material taught

should refer to the investigation cycle, which consists of 1) Observation, 2) Questions, 3) Developing hypotheses, 4) Data collection, and 5) Inference.

c) Questioning: Questioning is the first step towards knowledge. The primary approach in contextual learning is questioning. In the learning process, questioning is the teacher's task to promote, teach, and evaluate learners' thinking skills. Questioning activities are helpful in productive learning about 1) Seeking information about administration and education, 2) Checking students' level of understanding, 3) Motivating students to respond, 4) Knowing students' level of curiosity, and 5) Knowing what students know.

d) *Learning Community*: According to community learning theory, "sharing" information between peers, groups, and people who already know provides learning outcomes. Every community member gains knowledge in this place, in this classroom, and in the surrounding environment. Teachers should always engage in group learning in the school in contextualized learning. Learners are divided into diverse learning groups: the smarter teach, the less; those who know guide the uninitiated; the faster help the slow, and those with ideas make suggestions.

e) *Modeling:* Modeling is part of contextual learning. That is, there is a model that can be imitated to learn specific skills or knowledge. This model can operate as a tool, such as throwing a ball in sports, writing work, English grammar, etc. Therefore, the teacher is not the only model of contextual learning.

f) *Reflection*: The contextual approach considers reflection as an essential component of learning. Reflection is the process of thinking about new learning or past experiences. Learners emphasize improvement or revision of prior knowledge. Reflection is how we respond to new situations, activities or information. The Washington State Consortium for Contextual Education and Learning says the reflection process consists of: 1. thinking about what has been learned. 2. Revising and responding to conditions, activities, and experiences. 3. Recording what we have learned and how we use it to experience new concepts. 4. This can include journals, conversations, and innovative products. After the lesson is over, students have the opportunity to make sense of what they have learned. One example is when they create a Venn diagram of all the learners being asked to think about their work.

g) Accurate assessment: Assessment is collecting data to describe student learning development. Teachers must understand students' development to ensure an appropriate learning process.

Suppose the data collected by the teacher shows that the student has delayed during the learning process. In that case, the teacher must take appropriate action to ensure the student does not delay again.

The main idea behind contextual learning is as follows: This learning emphasizes student involvement in discovering material and prioritizing direct experience. Students are encouraged to relate the topics learned to real situations, making the material relevant and memorable. In addition, learning enables students to apply knowledge in everyday life, understand the material, and influence how they interact with others. In a contextualized classroom, the teacher's job is to help students achieve their goals. Contextual learning involves the active role of learners in the learning process, namely by linking academic lessons with real-life contexts (Fauzi et al., 2023).

When educators provide information to students, they must provide them with opportunities to learn the information to make it more relevant to their lives. Through a contextual approach, teachers provide students with opportunities to ask questions, increase their knowledge, and provide examples (Kahfi et al., 2021). According to (Cholil et al., 2023), Contextual learning involves students working together, supporting each other, being integrated, utilizing various references, participating students, analytical students, innovative teachers, and hallways decorated with student work. Through the use of contextual learning models in the learning process, student learning outcomes improve. Contextual learning makes students more interested in learning individually or in groups to find solutions to the problems discussed (Yusnaldi et al., 2024). In addition, contextual learning makes students feel more motivated to learn, which makes them stay excited and complete tasks on time.

The application of contextual learning has benefits, namely: a) Improves students' ability to think critically, logically, and systematically b) Students' understanding increases c) Increases their sensitivity to the surrounding environment; and d) Increases students' creativity related to problems (Aminah et al., 2022). Learning in elementary schools has not been applied appropriately and thoroughly to all subjects; one of the contextual learning applications is mathematics learning.

In its application, the teacher relates to something or objects around; for example, in learning to build simple spaces, the contextual approach is applied based on seven principles: constructivism, discovery, asking questions, learning communities, modelling, reflection, and authentic assessment. This research also refers to and implements these seven principles. For a deeper understanding, here are the specific steps involved in contextualized learning:

a) The educator starts the apperception by asking students about their knowledge of simple spaces (constructivism, asking).
b) Learners and educators ask questions about examples of simple

block-shaped spaces around the environment. One student is invited to come forward and bring an example of a block to show to his friends (inquiry, modelling).

c) The teacher guides the students to recognize the parts of a block, such as sides, corner points, and ribs (constructivism, questioning, modelling).

d) Learners are divided into six groups, each with six students, and given LKS, tools, and media for group discussion.

e) The teacher gives directions on group discussion activities and asks students to work on the worksheet in block-shaped spaces.

f) Through question and answer, learners in groups can show each other the parts of a block based on its characteristics.

g) Students take turns presenting their work to the class by bringing the building blocks media. Educators also provide opportunities for other groups to ask questions or comment using the question-and-answer method.

h) The teacher asks students about any alternative questions they may have about the task that has been given.

i) The teacher helps students conclude the lesson. The teacher conducts individual evaluations through written tests to measure students' competency achievement, which are then used for reflection and authentic assessment.

4. Conclusion

In learning, there are still many less enthusiastic students. One of the factors is that students do not understand the material being studied, so applying contextual learning in elementary schools to the classroom and outside activities impacts students' mastery of the material being taught. This is because contextual learning emphasizes student activeness and learning processes relevant to students' real lives. So that students can think critically, solve problems, and collaborate with their peers. When students can understand the material, it will also increase their enthusiasm for learning because there are no more obstacles to learning.

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