The Learning Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Developing Students' Ability to Express Opinions in Grade VIII at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan

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Abstract: This research aims to develop students' ability to express opinions in Islamic Religious Education classes. The approach used is qualitative descriptive with interview, observation, and documentation methods to identify students' challenges and needs in learning. Based on the results of the analysis of case studies, it was found that the use of interactive learning methods, such as group discussions, student presentations, question and answer methods, as well as contextual approaches that are relevant to students' daily lives, can significantly improve students' ability to express opinions. This innovation also encourages more cognitive and reflective learning, so that students can understand the importance of being good at expressing opinions. Thus, innovative learning methods are expected to be able to create students who are skilled and confident in expressing their opinions.	*Keywords:* Learning Strategies; Developing Abilities; Expressing Opinions.
Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan kemampuan siswa dalam mengemukakan pendapat dikelas Pendidikan Agama Islam. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan dan kebutuhan siswa dalam pembelajaran. Berdasarkan hasil analisis studi kasus, ditemukan bahwa penggunaan metode pembelajaran interaktif, seperti diskusi kelompok, presentasi siswa, metode tanya jawab, serta pendekatan kontekstual yang relevan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari siswa, dapat secara signifikan meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam mengemukakan pendapat. Inovasi ini juga mendorong pembelajaran yang lebih segnifikan dan reflektif, sehingga siswa dapat memahami pentingnya pandai mengemukakan pendapat. Dengan demikian, metode pembelajaran yang inovatif diharapkan mampu menciptakan siswa yang terampil dan percaya diri dalam mengemukakan pendapat.	*Kata Kunci:* Strategi Pembelajaran; Mengembangkan Kemampuan; Mengemukakan Pendapat.

A. Introduction

Education plays a vital role in the life of a nation because it serves as a means to enhance and develop the quality of human resources and to ensure

the survival of the nation and state. Additionally, education also plays an important role in fostering and developing the potential of every individual to achieve their goals. Therefore, education must be carried out as effectively as possible. As stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (SISDIKNAS), the national education goal is explained as follows:

"Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed by themselves, society, the nation, and the state" (Sutisna, 2019).

"Teaching and Learning Strategies" are carefully planned actions for the teaching and learning activities of an educator to achieve success in teaching. Learning is "change." In this case, learning refers to efforts to change behavior. So, learning will bring about changes in individuals. These changes are not only related to knowledge but also take the form of skills, attitudes, understanding, self-esteem, interests, character, and self-adjustment, encompassing all aspects of the organism and personal behavior (Fitria & Sukma, 2013).

Given the importance of motivation in learning activities, it is essential to pay special attention to the motivation students possess. Teachers, in particular, must truly understand the learning motivation of their students in relation to the subjects being taught. If students' learning motivation is low, the teacher should follow up. Teachers must be able to encourage or motivate their students to learn well and achieve good academic performance (Abdullah et al., n.d.).

Expressing opinions is one of the communication skills with others through language. It is the ability to convey ideas or thoughts orally in a logical manner using proper language. The skill of expressing opinions is one that students must possess. This skill is essential in daily life, whether in family life, in the community, or in the workplace. Especially in today's modern life.

The ability to express opinions properly allows one to channel ideas and feelings intelligently, according to the context and situation when speaking. Furthermore, this ability helps students become cultured future generations, as they are accustomed to speaking and expressing opinions in proper language. Therefore, students' skills in expressing opinions must be nurtured early through interaction in learning, as lack of student involvement in interacting and expressing opinions with fellow students or teachers during the learning process has a negative impact on their motivation and academic achievement (Maini Novita, 2021).

Having self-confidence is also crucial in the learning process. Self-confidence brings positive effects, such as the courage to ask questions or express thoughts and ideas. According to Newman (2008), self-confidence is an awareness of belief in oneself. It also drives individuals to act responsibly, as they believe they have enough knowledge to act according to the procedure. Students are the nation's messengers, and they must have the confidence to express their wishes and desires (Dahlan & Murad, 2023).

According to Binti Maunah, motivation is encouragement. It is a conscious effort to influence someone's behavior to move them to take action, which results in a force or factor within humans that evokes, directs, and organizes their behavior. Therefore, motivation is the drive within a person to strive for better behavior to meet their needs (Romziana et al., 2021).

Based on observations at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan, as an educational institution striving to shape a generation that is skilled, faithful, and has noble character through general and religious education, there is a lack of student activity in expressing opinions in the 8th-grade class at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan during the teaching and learning process. This observation serves as the foundation for writing this article.

B.   Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, chosen to explore and understand students' courage in expressing opinions and the extent of the role of Islamic Education teachers in developing the ability to articulate those opinions. The study was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan during July and August over a period of 25 days. The subjects of this research are Islamic Education teachers and eighth-grade students who are directly involved in the Islamic Education learning process.

The data collection techniques used in this study include interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with selected Islamic Education teachers and students. Observations were carried out during Islamic Education lessons in the classroom. Documentation involved reviewing students' learning outcomes, such as assignments or evaluations given by the teacher. The data were analyzed using case study analysis, which includes data collection and transcription, coding, and grouping themes related to student engagement and teaching methods, followed by data interpretation to draw conclusions. Data validation was carried out using triangulation techniques.

C.   Results and Discussion

The research findings indicate that PAI (Islamic Education) teachers employ various interactive and participatory approaches to facilitate students in developing speaking and argumentative skills. The identified strategies include:

a.   **Group Discussions**

Teachers regularly use group discussions as a learning method. In this activity, students are divided into small groups and asked to discuss a topic relevant to the PAI material. Teachers give students the freedom to express their opinions, provided that these opinions are supported by logical arguments in line with Islamic teachings. This method is effective in encouraging shy students to speak, as they feel more comfortable discussing in small groups.

b.   **Student Presentations**

Each student is asked to present the results of the group discussion in front of the class in turn. This activity is designed to train students in presenting ideas in a structured manner and being open to questions and responses from classmates. Teachers assess not only the content of the material but also the delivery and the students' courage in arguing.

c.   **Open Question and Answer Method**

Teachers use an open question and answer method where students are given the opportunity to ask questions and challenge opinions presented by classmates or the teacher. This method encourages active two-way dialogue between teachers and students as well as among students themselves. The teacher acts as a facilitator, ensuring that discussions run smoothly and orderly, and encouraging each student to participate.

d.   **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)**

Teachers also utilize a problem-based learning approach, where students are given cases or problems to solve based on their understanding of Islamic teachings. Students are encouraged to propose solutions or express their opinions regarding these issues. Through this method, students are trained to think critically and practice their skills in providing solutions based on Islamic values.

e.   **Positive Feedback**

Teachers consistently provide positive feedback on students' efforts to express their opinions, both verbally and in writing. This aims to build students' confidence and motivate them to continue practicing expressing their opinions. Teachers also provide constructive corrections to help students improve their speaking and argumentative abilities.

The research findings show that the learning strategies implemented by PAI teachers at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan have helped develop students' abilities to express their opinions. The use of group discussion and student presentation methods, for example, has provided students with a space to practice speaking in a more relaxed and less intimidating atmosphere compared to speaking in front of the entire class individually. Additionally, these strategies promote cooperation among students, making them more open to exchanging opinions and supporting one another in learning.

The open question and answer approach and problem-based learning have successfully stimulated students' critical thinking. By being given the opportunity to ask questions and debate, students learn to listen to others' opinions, critique arguments, and build more mature opinions based on strong foundations. In this context, the teacher not only serves as a source of information but also as a facilitator who aids students in the critical and reflective thinking process.

The use of positive feedback by teachers is also very effective in enhancing students' confidence. Students who were initially hesitant or afraid to speak in front of the class begin to show increased courage in expressing their opinions. With continuous guidance and encouragement from teachers, students learn to be more confident in presenting their ideas, both in academic contexts and in everyday life (Mutia, 2024).

However, there are several challenges faced by teachers in implementing these strategies. One of them is the disparity in students' abilities to express opinions. Students with lower communication skills often feel intimidated by their more articulate peers, prompting teachers to ensure that each student has a fair opportunity to speak. Teachers must also manage time effectively so that all students can participate in discussions or presentations.

Overall, the learning strategies employed by PAI teachers at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan are effective in developing students' abilities to express their opinions. Consistent implementation and support from teachers, along with a conducive learning environment, are key factors in the success of this learning process.

However, the most effective method in teaching is the question-and-answer method, which makes students more willing to express their opinions. The necessity to answer becomes the main reason for them to respond; occasionally, some students feel burdened by this due to their lack of knowledge on the topic, but this should not be an excuse to refrain from expressing opinions.

Interviews with several students, such as Aldiano, reveal that "Sometimes, it's not that we don't want to express our opinions, but because of the doubts about what we will say, we hesitate to share our views. We also fear being blamed for what we say."

The fear of being reprimanded when expressing opinions and the lack of self-confidence among students in voicing their thoughts are reasons for their reluctance to share opinions.

Students need to cultivate bravery within themselves to express opinions or ask questions during the learning process. If students dare to express their opinions, a sense of self-confidence will grow, enabling them to ask questions or share their thoughts. Students' courage in voicing opinions to enhance understanding is fostered by: first, asking the teacher (Dahlan & Murad, 2023).

Students' habituation in interacting is also practiced, as interacting with classmates will make them feel less shy or fearful about asking questions. By doing so, they become familiar with the various characters of their classmates.

Teachers at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan create student engagement in the question-and-answer process in the classroom. The learning process involves communication between teachers and students aimed at achieving the set objectives in the teaching-learning situation. The relationship between students and teachers can be established through various skills, taking into account the uniqueness and diversity of students. It is essential that teachers possess various skills to support the implementation of teaching and learning activities in schools. There are many ways to enhance students' academic performance.

D.   Conclusion

The results of the research lead to the conclusion that students' reluctance to express their opinions is due to a lack of self-confidence and language skills. Therefore, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers often conduct lessons using a question-and-answer method to familiarize students with speaking and expressing their opinions. The PAI teacher also teaches students to be confident in their opinions because confident students are intelligent in exploring knowledge.

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