The Strategy For Developing Islamic Religious Education Materials That Are Contextual To The Lives Of Students At SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan.

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the strategy for developing contextual Islamic Religious Education (IRE) material related to the lives of students at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan. This research is a descriptive qualitative study. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The data analysis technique used follows the Miles and Huberman model. The results indicate that IRE teachers have made efforts to connect the learning material with the students' life contexts, such as teenage interactions, digital ethics, and social relationships. Discussion and case simulation methods are applied to enhance student engagement. However, there are still challenges in developing more innovative materials due to reliance on rigid textbooks. Students respond positively to material that is relevant to their daily lives, although some feel that the material is sometimes too theoretical.	*Keywords:* Development Strategy; contextual; Islamic Religious Education Material.
Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi pengembangan materi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) yang kontekstual dengan kehidupan siswa di SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi dan dokementasi. Teknik yang digunakan untuk menganalisis data menggunakan model miles dan hubermen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru PAI telah berusaha mengaitkan materi pembelajaran dengan konteks kehidupan siswa, seperti pergaulan remaja, etika digital, dan hubungan sosial. Metode diskusi dan simulasi kasus diterapkan untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa. Namun, masih ada kendala dalam pengembangan materi yang lebih inovatif, karena ketergantungan pada buku teks yang kaku. Siswa merespon positif terhadap materi yang relevan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari, meskipun ada yang merasa materi terkadang terlalu teoritis.	*Kata Kunci:* Strategi Pengembangan; Kobtekstual; Pendidikan Agama Islam.

A. Introduction

Education aims to enhance the quality of human resources and aligns with the provisions outlined in Article 3, Chapter II of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003. This law emphasizes that national education plays

a role in shaping individuals with character, civility, and a responsibility to contribute to the development of the nation's civilization. Additionally, education seeks to develop students' potential so they grow into individuals who are faithful, pious, morally upright, healthy, intelligent, creative, independent, and capable of contributing as responsible and democratic citizens (Baharuddin, 2024).

According to the previously mentioned National Education System Law, one of the characteristics of a quality individual is strong faith, deep devotion, and commendable behavior (Didik, 2024). Therefore, the success of education can be measured by its ability to strengthen faith and devotion, as well as to cultivate noble character. Achievements in shaping good morals and ethics serve as the primary indicators of the success of national education goals.

In Islamic education, strengthening the competencies of faith, piety, and moral integrity has long been a central focus in various Islamic educational institutions. From an Islamic perspective, faith and piety, along with knowledge and technology, are essential elements for humans in fulfilling their role as stewards on earth (Akbar & Barni, 2022). To carry out this responsibility, two key aspects are needed: a solid foundation in faith and morality, and the ability to utilize knowledge and technology as tools to perform the role of a khalifah (Pendidikan et al., n.d.).

Amid the dynamics of globalization and modernization, educators face increasingly complex challenges, particularly in presenting Islamic Religious Education (PAI) content that is relevant to students' daily lives. One essential approach is the development of contextual materials, which are designed and delivered by considering the social and cultural realities as well as the individual needs of students. A contextual approach emphasizes the connection between the taught material and students' real-life experiences. Thus, students not only gain a theoretical understanding of Islamic teachings but also learn to apply them in various life situations (Zailani, n.d.) . Contextual teaching also

aims to integrate Islamic values into students' daily lives, whether in the family, school, or community.

According to Sari and Handayani (2021), various teaching strategies such as project-based approaches, case studies, and problem-solving can be used to implement contextual Islamic Religious Education (PAI) content. They demonstrate that these methods can help students understand how religious teachings are applied in various concrete situations (Saputra, 2023) .

Another factor driving the importance of developing contextual Islamic Religious Education (PAI) materials is the diversity of students' social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Each student has different life experiences, so the material presented must bridge these differences to ensure that all students can better understand and appreciate Islamic teachings (Fahrieyah, 2024). Additionally, the rapid advancement of technology and information requires PAI education to be dynamic and adaptable to the changing times, while still adhering to the fundamental values of Islam.

Currently, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in schools tends to focus on delivering "information about Islam" and places less emphasis on the appreciation and application of Islamic values in students' lives. This is evident from the frequent use of lecture-based teaching methods, which dominate classroom instruction (Ramadani et al., 2024). Although students may understand religious concepts, the internalization of Islamic values does not occur automatically. The overuse of lecture methods may hinder a deeper understanding and internalization of these values. Therefore, alternative teaching approaches are needed to more effectively help students internalize Islamic values (Akbar & Barni, 2022).

In Islamic Religious Education, students often feel bored or disinterested due to teaching methods that are traditionally outdated and less relevant to their personal experiences or daily lives (Ilham & Eka, 2024). As a result, students' learning outcomes are low, with only a few students truly grasping the material presented by the teacher. Teachers frequently fail to connect

Islamic Religious Education content with real-life situations that students encounter, making the lessons feel monotonous and diminishing students' motivation to learn (Salwa et al., 2024).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Junior High School can be enhanced by employing a contextual approach. Developing contextual PAI materials is expected to increase student engagement in the learning process, as they find the content relevant and beneficial to their lives (Arman, 2023). Materials that are closely aligned with students' real-life experiences are easier to understand, internalize, and apply. Ultimately, contextual PAI instruction can support the achievement of Islamic education goals, which include fostering a generation with noble character, strong religious knowledge, and the ability to make positive contributions to society (M.Syahrin Arrapi Harahap, 2024).

This study aims to identify effective methods and techniques for integrating contextual elements into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) materials at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan. The goal is to enable students to naturally apply Islamic teachings in their daily lives at school. This approach is intended to be relevant not only to the social and cultural context of the students but also to make a significant contribution to the development of students' character and moral values within an inclusive and harmonious educational environment.

B.   Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, aiming to deeply understand the strategies for developing contextual Islamic Education (PAI) materials relevant to students' lives. The research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan and took place in August 2024. The data collection techniques used were interviews, observations, and documentation (Prof.Dr.Sugiono, 2021).

The data analysis techniques that have been refined will facilitate the researcher in collecting further data, presenting the data, and drawing

conclusions (Moleong, 2002). This method is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of how Islamic Education (PAI) materials can be developed to be relevant to students' lives, and how these strategies can be effectively implemented.

C.   Results and Discussion

Contextual learning is based on John Dewey's research (in Badruzaman, 2006:26), which shows that students learn most effectively when the material being taught is relevant to what they already know and to the activities or events occurring around them. This approach emphasizes critical thinking skills, knowledge transfer, and the ability to collect and analyze data to solve various problems, both individually and in groups.

Jawahir (2005) suggests that PAI teachers should utilize contextual learning strategies by considering the following aspects: a) providing a variety of activities to address individual differences among students; b) enhancing the active involvement of both students and teachers; c) encouraging the development of new skills; d) creating connections between learning activities at school, home, and in the community. This approach makes students more responsive in applying knowledge and skills to real-life situations, thereby increasing their motivation to learn.

Sagala, as described in the work compiled by Andi Sulistio, explains that contextual learning is an approach where teachers connect instructional material with students' everyday experiences, thereby encouraging students to apply the knowledge they gain in their daily lives. Essentially, the contextual process involves understanding, adjustment, organization, integration, reflection, and dynamic, open-ended reconstruction of concepts (Anggraini, 2010).

Through the development of more contextual material, Islamic Education can become more engaging and relevant for students. This approach also allows teachers to use more creative and interactive teaching methods, such as case

studies, group discussions, simulations, and the use of digital technology. In this way, students not only learn about religious teachings cognitively but also practice them in their daily lives, bridging the gap between theory and reality.

Contextual learning can be summarized as a teaching method employed by teachers to connect instructional material with students' real-life experiences, allowing students to draw meaning or conclusions from the material. Essentially, learning is an activity undertaken by students to acquire new knowledge (Rohmah & Dasar, 2017). Additionally, according to Dimyati and Mujiono in a journal compiled by Khoirul Budi Utomo, learning is an interaction between teachers and students that involves activities and learning objectives aligned with the curriculum (Utomo 2018:145). The goal of Islamic education is to support individuals in applying Islamic teachings in their daily lives, with the hope that students will behave in accordance with Islamic principles.

The development of Islamic Education materials that are contextual to the lives of students at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan has produced several important findings regarding the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing understanding, internalization, and application of religious values in daily life.

1. Enhancing the Connection Between Material and Real Life : Islamic Education (PAI) materials tailored to the students' life contexts have proven to help them better understand religious concepts. Materials directly related to everyday experiences, such as manners in society, interfaith tolerance, or the importance of environmental preservation, become more relevant to students.

2. Internalization of Religious Values : Contextualized materials help students not only understand Islamic values theoretically but also encourage them to internalize religious teachings in their daily behavior. This demonstrates that teaching which links theory with real-life practice accelerates the internalization of religious values.

3. Increased Student Motivation and Participation : The development of contextual materials has succeeded in boosting students' motivation to learn. Since the material taught is more relevant and touches on their real-life experiences, students become more interested and active in learning. Active student participation in lessons also increases as they can share personal experiences that are relevant to the material.

4. Contextualization in Facing Modern Challenges : Modern challenges such as globalization, technology, and digital culture often influence students' understanding of religious teachings. The development of contextual PAI materials allows for religious teaching that is adaptive to contemporary developments without sacrificing core religious values. This helps students understand how religious teachings can be applied in the digital age.

5. Strengthening Character and Noble Morals : One significant outcome of contextual material development is the strengthening of students' character. By presenting materials related to real life, students can more easily see the relevance of religious teachings to their personal and social challenges. Contextual PAI materials have proven effective in guiding students to be more responsible, honest, and disciplined, while also fostering tolerance in diversity.

6. Development of Critical Thinking Skills : Through contextual learning, students are encouraged to connect Islamic religious concepts with the concrete situations they experience. This helps develop students' critical thinking skills as they are guided to analyze, evaluate, and make decisions based on Islamic values.

Overall, the development of contextual Islamic Education (PAI) materials has a positive impact on improving the understanding, internalization, and application of Islamic values in students' lives. This is crucial for shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also possesses good character and can contribute positively to society.

Therefore, Islamic Education learning at SMP Muhammadiyah 07 Medan must also take into account the psychological and sociocultural aspects of the students. As an educational institution operating in a diverse environment, the school must equip students with an inclusive and tolerant understanding of Islam. Contextual Islamic Education materials should be able to address various issues faced by students, such as social interactions, digital ethics, and topics related to social justice and diversity. Thus, religious education is not only a subject but also a means of character development to help students face global challenges.

D. Conclusion

The strategy for developing Islamic Religious Education (IRE) material that is contextual to students' lives is crucial for enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of learning. Through a contextual approach, students not only learn theoretically but are also able to understand and apply Islamic values in real-life situations they encounter daily. This approach helps connect IRE material with relevant moral and social challenges, such as the use of technology, ethics on social media, and interactions within a diverse society. Although efforts have been made to relate the teaching material to students' lives, challenges still remain, such as the reliance on textbooks and the lack of alternative resources.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers are expected to be more creative in finding additional material that is up-to-date and relevant to students' lives. This can involve the use of digital media, contemporary case studies, and the integration of technology in teaching. Additionally, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) lessons should be more interactive by increasing group discussions and case simulations, allowing students to connect Islamic teachings with the real-life challenges they face daily.

E.   References

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