

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING ACTIVE LEARNING VIA ONLINE IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION CLASS: A CASE STUDY OF SEKOLAH MENENGAH SETIABUDI

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ABSTRACT

Teaching methodology is an important topic that needs to be discussed and debated so that a comprehensive understanding can be conveyed to teachers for the success of 21st-century education. Furthermore, active learning is one of the main concerns in 21st-century learning, making it an important element in effective teaching and learning. In view of the spread of Covid-19, the use of online teaching and learning has gained more attention and become the mode of today's education. As teachers are compelled to teach online, they have to struggle in ensuring that active learning still occurs when teaching students online. Hence, the main objectives of the study were to discover the initiatives taken by Islamic Education teachers in implementing Active Learning in the Islamic Education subject and to identify the challenges they faced when teaching online. The study was conducted in a secondary school in Selangor, involving three Islamic Education teachers. Employing the qualitative approach, the teachers were interviewed individually, and data collected were analysed thematically. Three broad themes emerged from the interview data; teachers' competency in implementing active learning online, the challenges they faced, and initiatives done to manage these challenges. The results showed that teachers lacked knowledge and skills in implementing active learning online. They also faced many problems such as lack of student engagement and infrastructure. However, continuous support and training provided by the school have helped teachers in overcoming these challenges. It is hoped that the findings of the study can raise teachers' awareness of the importance of implementing active learning strategies when teaching online.

Keywords: Active learning, online learning, Islamic Education class

INTRODUCTION

Traditional lecture style is a common teaching approach in education, especially during face-to-face classes. The usage of traditional lecture during the teaching and learning process makes students' activities limited to listening, taking notes, and asking questions to the students which lead to more passive participants from students. 21st Century education has

introduced an educational field with many modern learning strategies, one of them is Active learning.

Active learning is not a new thing for teachers, especially for Islamic education teachers. However, teachers are still less practical in their teaching sessions. In addition, many studies show that students in Malaysia do not participate in Islamic education classes because they feel bored and passive in the classroom. Thus, this situation should not be allowed to linger as educational institutions today are constantly evolving while, students' thinking needs to be developed to meet with the current needs.

There are various obstacles and challenges in implementing active learning such as learning materials, preparation before starting the class, large class size, teachers' attitude, the content of the subject and students' attitude. Teachers should be concerned about facing these challenges so that they can overcome them to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Hopefully, this study can help Islamic Education teachers understand active learning more clearly and at the same time identify the challenges in implementing it. Moreover, this study can help Islamic education teachers to overcome these challenges in their teaching and learning sessions.

Active learning is the most important element applied during teaching and learning sessions, especially in Islamic Education. Many studies researched on the application of active learning as an interesting classroom activity or pedagogy, but they do not focus on active learning during online teaching. However, when Covid-19 Pandemic invaded the world, it gave a huge impact on various levels of educational institutions in conducting face-to-face teaching and learning. So, online distance learning is an initiative to replace the teaching and learning in the classroom.

Besides that, students do not participate in their learning because active learning was not promoted by teachers since they preferred teacher-centered learning. Hence, teachers need to implement active learning during online learning for a more effective classroom in Islamic Education. Teachers also need trainings in planning and improving their skills in engaging with students during online classes. Thus, there is a need to identify the challenges faced by Islamic education teachers to overcome the problems related to teaching online.

Furthermore, many educators misunderstood the meaning of active learning because they relied on its literal definition. As a result, they assumed all students are actively involved in the class when students paid attention in the class. However, studies explained that student engagement does not only require students to listen but also read, write, discuss and involved in problem-solving. Besides that, students should participate in higher order thinking activities such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Thus, active learning should be understood as instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are engaged in.

Moreover, the improvement of the teaching and learning process, good planning in the curriculum and its effective implementation have a

great impact on the development of educational quality. Therefore, authoritative bodies should improve the structure of curriculum implementation from time to time to ensure that it is always in line with the needs and the country's growing education system. Thus, many scholars believe that active learning is a very effective technique in giving a positive influence on student learning outcomes.

Active learning can help students to remember from what they have learnt where a study showed that a very high percentage of 70% to 90% can remember even after two weeks. A variety of activities such as group discussions, presentations, simulations, and tutorials are applied in an active learning approach. However, only about 10% to 30% of what students have learnt can be retained when they engage in passive activities such as lectures, visual arts, graphics, and maps.

There are three factors in implementing active learning that are interrelated. Firstly, the basic elements in active learning consist of speaking, listening, reading, writing, and reflecting where from these five elements, students can participate in cognitive activities such as explaining the question, combining, and appropriating the new knowledge. Secondly, the five elements that have been mentioned are the active learning strategies which consist of small groups, cooperative work, case studies, simulation, discussion, problem solving and journal writing. The third factor is that teaching resources for active learning are used to encourage students to interact and participate in related activities actively.

Some terms are related to active learning which are Experiential Learning, Problem Based Learning, Inquiry-based learning, Academic Service Learning, Interactive Learning, and Cooperative learning. Furthermore, Experiential Learning is known as a combination of active learning and participatory learning which can change students' roles from passive listeners to active participants and experiential learning acts as "data learning" where students can participate in the learning process proactively.

There are several challenges in implementing active learning which can hinder the effectiveness of using this method of teaching. Furthermore, some students do not accept active learning strategies because they are more likely to participate in learning passively. Besides that, there are students who are shy and afraid to express their ideas when teachers try to get their attention to participate in learning sessions through brainstorming.

This study is carried out to see the initiatives taken by Islamic Education teachers in implementing Active Learning in the Islamic Education subject and identify the challenges online teaching and learning faced by Islamic Education teachers. This study will give benefits to the teachers at the school level to improve their teaching methods in implementing active learning so that they can attract students' interest in participating in the teaching and learning sessions of Islamic Education subject.

The study also identifies the challenges of online learning sessions which have hindered teachers in the delivery of knowledge to the students. It also informs how teachers have strived to overcome these challenges in order to achieve the objectives of the learning session.

METHOD

This study used case study as its research design in which the researcher focuses on a specific context about initiatives taken by Islamic Education teachers in implementing Active Learning in The Islamic Education subject and its. The researcher conducted interview sessions with the participants in which several criteria were used to select them.

The researcher selected a secondary school in the Gombak in state of Selangor area for the purpose of conducting this study. The researcher conducted interview sessions with the participants to collect the data. The researcher collected the data through a face-to-face interview session conducted with Islamic Education teachers.

There were two objectives to achieve in this study. Firstly, to reach the first research objective, the participants were asked about the knowledge of active learning and its types applied during online teaching and learning process. Secondly, the participants were asked about challenges in implementing active learning via online platforms to achieve the second research objective.

The researcher analysed the information from the interview session between the interviewer and the participants by transcribing the audio recordings into text. There were three themes that emerged from the data collected, which were demographic characteristics, implementation of active learning in online teaching and learning, and challenges in implementing active learning in online teaching and learning. After that, the researcher provided a table to show the data and summary of these themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the participants' comments, they have a general understanding of active learning, nevertheless, their definition of active learning is less precise and thorough. Participants have mentioned that active learning focuses on two-way learning which involves students' communication and interaction with their teachers during the learning sessions. Active learning, on the other hand, is not restricted to two-way contact, rather, it encompasses a wide range of activities and strategies.

The misunderstanding of the concept of active learning among the participants was based on popular definition. As a result, the teacher-participants assumed that since students are listening to their teaching session, they are already actively engaged in the lesson

Furthermore, participants specified only a few types of active learning, even though there are many other types of activities that can be done during the learning sessions. They claimed that they lack the skills in using applications and resources for conducting active learning online. At

the same time, neither teachers nor students have access to sufficient technology or an efficient internet network.

Moreover, students, teachers, current textbooks, and online class schedules were the four challenges that all participants faced while introducing active learning in online classes. Besides that, the problem with the lack of student participation is supported by some studies in which there are various obstacles to implementing active learning that can reduce the efficiency of this teaching style.

Findings

Based on the data that has been analysed, the participants showed that they have a basic understanding of active learning. However, the data indicates that participants were less effective in implementing active learning because of a variety of variables that restrict them from doing so as a whole.

However, there is no doubt that the participants have made an effort to overcome the challenges of active online teaching and learning. The findings also show that the participants made thorough preparations before the learning session and at the same time the participants asked their students to also make good preparations to ensure active participation and engagement from the students. In addition, the teacher-participants also tried to provide a variety of teaching resources and tools to ensure the continuity of active learning during online classes. Apart from these, teacher-participants also strived to improve their skills in mastering and in using applications that are appropriate for online classes.

The data has shown that participants faced various challenges when implementing active learning based on the issues highlighted by them. Among the issues are matters related to students, teachers, current textbooks, facilities, and online class schedules. In short, the issue of students' participation in online classes is an issue that has been highlighted by all participants because it posed the biggest challenge to the participants in their implementation of active learning.

The issue of the lack of a good internet network faced by both the students and teachers is also a challenge that will affect the learning process. In addition, the issue of textbook that were less supportive of online learning has also become a hindrance. Moreover, the lack of facilities in terms of suitable applications and gadgets. Finally, ineffective online class schedules were also some of the other problems faced by the teachers and students.

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 is presented to show how the findings are related to the study.

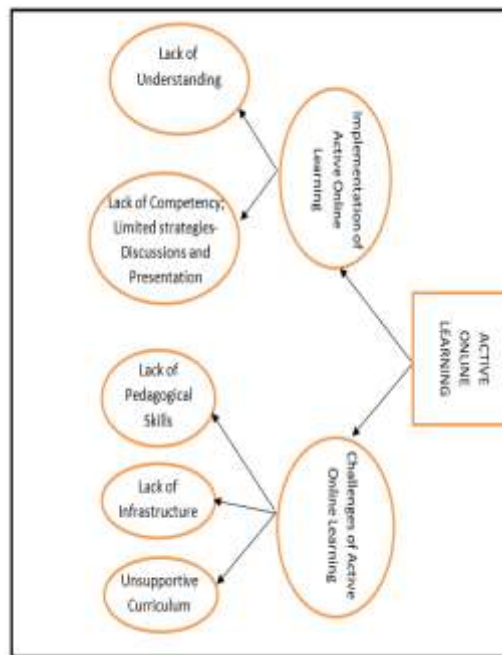


Figure 1. Framework of the study

The implementation of active learning as practised by the teacher-participants can be regarded as very lacking, yet this is due to the teachers' lack of clear understanding and competency in active learning in general and via online in particular. However, the challenges found in the study are quite congruent to those depicted in the framework of the study in Figure 1. What the study has discovered is that the challenges can be categorised into three aspects i.e., the lack of pedagogical skills of the teacher-participants, the lack of good and efficient infrastructure such as textbooks, materials, and internet network, and the curriculum which was designed to suit face-to-face teaching and learning rather than an online one, hence causing it to be unsupportive of the online mode of learning.

CONCLUSION

This study explains that teachers have initiatives to implement active learning to students where teachers have continuously strived to overcome various issues and problems faced by them. Furthermore, this research successfully analysed the challenges of online teaching and learning, introducing teachers to issues with integrating active learning through online learning. Teachers should improve their competency of active teaching strategies, particularly via online mode. Besides that, teachers have been found able to implement active learning, but they require a good preparation to ensure that each method practised is being implemented effectively. Furthermore, issues related to students, teachers, current textbooks, facilities, and online class schedules must be resolved wisely as these constraints have prevented teachers from implementing active learning via online.

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