CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING: A TEACHER PERSPECTIVE STUDY

Muttaqin Kholis Ali[1], Al Muhtadibillah Ali[2], Arrahmil Hasanah[3]

[1]SMA Negeri 1 Tambangan, Jl. Trans Sumatera Bukittinggi-Padang Sidempuan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Negeri Padang, Jl. Prof. Dr. Hamka, Padang, Sumatera Barat, Indonesia
[3]SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan Selatan, Kayu Laut, Mandailing Natal, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia
Email: muttaqin2715@gmail.com

Abstract. This study examines the challenges faced by teachers in implementing contextual learning at SMA Negeri 1 Tambangan with a focus on the Learning Community aspect. Using a qualitative approach with a descriptive study method, this study involved 30 teachers through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document studies. Data analysis is carried out qualitatively consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results reveal significant challenges, including difficulties in creating collaborative learning environments, time constraints, challenges in designing relevant learning tasks, student ability gaps, and barriers to technology integration. Contextual factors such as students' socio-economic backgrounds and community expectations also play important roles. Despite facing challenges, some teachers successfully developed innovative strategies. This research highlights the complexity of implementing contextual learning and the need for a systemic approach in educational reform, involving transformation in teaching practices, school structures, and culture.

Keywords: Contextual Learning, Community, Implementation Challenges

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengkaji tantangan yang dihadapi guru dalam melaksanakan pembelajaran kontekstual di SMA Negeri 1 Tambangan dengan fokus pada aspek Masyarakat Belajar. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi deskriptif, penelitian ini melibatkan 30 orang guru melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumen. Analisis data dilakukan secara kualitatif yang terdiri dari reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya tantangan yang signifikan, termasuk kesulitan dalam menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang kolaboratif, keterbatasan waktu, tantangan dalam merancang tugas pembelajaran yang relevan, kesenjangan kemampuan siswa, dan hambatan dalam integrasi teknologi. Faktor kontekstual seperti latar belakang sosial ekonomi siswa dan harapan masyarakat juga berperan penting. Meski menghadapi tantangan, beberapa guru berhasil mengembangkan strategi inovatif. Penelitian ini menyoroti kompleksitas penerapan pembelajaran kontekstual dan perlunya pendekatan sistematis dalam reformasi pendidikan, yang melibatkan transformasi dalam praktik pengajaran, struktur sekolah, dan budaya.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Kontekstual, Komunitas, Tantangan Implementasi

INTRODUCTION

Education is the main foundation in the development of a nation. Good quality education will produce superior human resources and be able to compete in the global era. To improve the quality of education, various approaches and learning methods have been developed, one of which is contextual learning. Contextual teaching and learning (CTL) is a learning concept that helps teachers relate the material taught to students' real-world situations and encourages students to make connections between the knowledge they have and its application in their lives as family members and society (Supranoto, 2016). This approach is considered effective in improving students' understanding of learning materials and developing higher order thinking skills. Although contextual learning has been recognized as an effective approach, its implementation in the field still faces various challenges. Research conducted by (Suryawati, 2013) shows that there are still many teachers who have difficulties in implementing contextual learning in the classroom. This is caused by various factors, such as teachers' lack of understanding of the concept of contextual learning, limited resources and supporting facilities, and time constraints in preparing and implementing learning.

One of the important aspects in the implementation of contextual learning is the ability of teachers to design and implement learning that is meaningful and relevant to students' real lives. However, according to (Hamruni, 2015), many teachers still have difficulty in integrating real-life contexts into learning materials. This results in the learning carried out not optimally in achieving contextual learning goals. On the other hand, technological developments and rapid social changes also provide challenges for teachers in implementing contextual learning. Teachers are required to continue to update their knowledge and skills to present learning that is relevant to the current context. Research conducted by (ardiyansyah, 2023b), indicating that many teachers find it difficult to keep up with technology and integrate it into contextual learning.

In addition, the differences in student characteristics and socio-cultural context in each region are also challenges in the implementation of contextual learning. Teachers must be able to adapt contextual learning approaches according to the needs and backgrounds of diverse students. This is in line with the opinion (Anggraini, 2017) which emphasizes the importance of considering local contexts in the application of contextual learning. Seeing the complexity of the challenges faced by teachers in implementing contextual learning, an in-depth study of teachers' perspectives on these challenges is needed. A comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by teachers can be the basis for the development of strategies and policies to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of contextual learning in schools.

Based on this background, the formulation of the problem in this study is: (1) What are the challenges faced by teachers in implementing contextual learning? (2) What is the teacher's perspective on these challenges? (3) What strategies do teachers use to overcome challenges in the implementation of contextual learning? The purpose of this study is to examine in depth the challenges faced by teachers in implementing contextual learning, analyze teachers' perspectives on these challenges, and identify strategies carried out by teachers to overcome challenges in the implementation of contextual learning. Through this research, it is hoped that a comprehensive understanding of the reality of the implementation of contextual learning in the field can be obtained from the perspective of teachers as the main implementers.

In the context of the implementation of contextual learning, it is also necessary to pay attention to the psychological and pedagogical aspects that affect the effectiveness of its implementation. According to the theory of social constructivism developed by Vygotsky, learning occurs through social and cultural interaction (Harefa et al., 2024). Contextual learning is in line with this principle because it emphasizes the relevance between learning materials and the real-life context of students. However, challenges arise when teachers must facilitate a meaningful knowledge construction process for each student with diverse backgrounds. In addition, the implementation of contextual learning is also closely related to the concept of Proximal Development Zones (ZPD) introduced by Vygotsky. ZPD refers to the distance between the actual level of development and the potential level of development that can be achieved with the help of a more capable adult or peer (Amelia, 2020). In this context, teachers are challenged to design learning that resides within the student's ZPD, while considering relevant real-life contexts. It requires complex skills in analyzing students' learning needs and integrating them with curriculum demands.

Furthermore, the application of contextual learning is also related to the theory of multiple intelligence proposed by (Syarifah, 2019). This theory states that everyone has a different combination of intelligence. Contextual learning, with its emphasis on real-world experiences and practical applications, has the potential to accommodate these different types of intelligence. However, the challenge is how teachers can design learning that accommodates the diversity of student intelligence while still maintaining contextual relevance. From the perspective of neuroscience, contextual learning also has a strong foundation. Research shows that the human brain tends to look for meaning in context and store information in the form of meaningful patterns (Trisniawati, 2015). Contextual learning, with its approach that emphasizes the relationship between knowledge and its application in real life, is in line with the natural workings of the brain. However, the challenge for teachers is how to design learning

experiences that can activate relevant neural patterns and facilitate the formation of new, meaningful connections.

In the context of technological developments, contextual learning is also faced with new challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, technology can expand the scope of the context that can be accessed by students, for example through virtual reality or augmented reality (Nurhayati & Vijayanthi, 2023). On the other hand, the inappropriate use of technology can distance students from the real context. Teachers are required to have adequate digital literacy and the ability to integrate technology effectively in contextual learning. Another aspect to consider is assessment in contextual learning. Authentic assessment, which reflects student performance in real-world contexts, is an integral component of contextual learning. However, the implementation of authentic assessments is often a challenge for teachers, especially in terms of designing authentic assignments, developing appropriate assessment rubrics, and managing time to carry out comprehensive assessments.

By considering the various aspects above, it becomes clear that the implementation of contextual learning requires a holistic and multidimensional approach. Systematic efforts are needed to develop teacher competence, not only in terms of understanding contextual learning concepts and strategies, but also in aspects of learning psychology, neuroscience, educational technology, and authentic assessment. This is in line with the view (Widiatmaka, 2021) which emphasizes the importance of continuous teacher professional development and integration with classroom practice. For school principals and policy makers at the school level, the results of this study can be considered in developing teacher professional development programs and providing supporting facilities for the effective implementation of contextual learning. Meanwhile, for policy makers at higher levels, such as the education office or the ministry of education, this research can provide input in the formulation of policies and programs that support the implementation of contextual learning in schools. Furthermore, the results of this study can also be useful for higher education institutions that organize teacher education programs. The findings in this study can be used as input in the development of curriculum and training programs for prospective teachers, so that they are better prepared to face the challenges of implementing contextual learning in the field. Thus, research on the challenges of implementing contextual learning from the perspective of teachers is expected to make a significant contribution to efforts to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. Through a deep understanding of the challenges faced by teachers, it is hoped that appropriate and effective solutions can be developed to support the implementation of optimal contextual learning in schools.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive study method to examine the challenges faced by teachers in carrying out contextual learning. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep and holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Child, 2008). The qualitative descriptive study method is used to describe in detail and systematically the facts and characteristics of the object or subject being studied appropriately (Rusandi & Rusli, 2021). In this study, data collection was carried out through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers who have implemented contextual learning in their classrooms. Semi-structured interviews are used to provide flexibility in digging up information from participants while maintaining a focus on the research objectives (Ruslin et al., 2022). The interview questions were developed based on a literature review of contextual learning and its implementation challenges.

Participatory observation is carried out to directly observe the contextual learning process in the classroom. Researchers will observe the interaction between teachers and students, the learning strategies used, and the challenges that arise during the learning process. This observation uses an observation guide developed based on the components of contextual learning (Hakim et al., 2023). In addition, field notes will be used to record important findings during observations. Documentation studies are carried out to analyze relevant documents, such as learning implementation plans, teaching materials, and learning evaluation results. The analysis of this document aims to obtain additional information about the preparation and implementation of contextual learning, as well as to triangulate the data with the results of interviews and observations (Nelish, 2022).

Participants in this study were selected using the purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of samples with certain considerations and objectives (Athanthayani, 2020). Participant selection criteria include: (1) teachers who have implemented contextual learning for at least two years; (2) teaching at the primary or secondary education level; and (3) willing to participate in research. The number of participants will be determined based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection will be stopped when no more new information is obtained (Saunders et al., 2018). The data analysis in this study uses a thematic analysis approach (Kruijtbosch, Göttgens-Jansen, Floor-Schreudering, van Leeuwen, & Bouvy, 2018). The data analysis process includes several stages: (1) familiarization with the data through interview transcripts and repeated readings; (2) data coding to identify relevant units of meaning; (3) grouping the codes into potential themes; (4) review and refinement of themes;

(5) the definition and naming of themes; and (6) report writing. The data analysis process will be assisted by the use of qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo to increase efficiency and accuracy in coding and organizing data (Welsh, 2002).

To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses several strategies. First, data triangulation is carried out by comparing data from various sources (interviews, observations, and documentation) to increase the credibility of the findings (Saadah et al., 2022). Second, member checking is carried out by asking participants to check the interview transcript and the researcher's initial interpretation to ensure accuracy and suitability with their perspective (Saadah et al., 2022). Third, peer debriefing is carried out by involving peers who are not involved in the research to provide input and alternative perspectives on the process of data analysis and interpretation (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). Analisis data dilakukan secara kualitatif yang terdiri atas reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Data analysis was carried out qualitatively consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS

The results of the research conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Tambangan involving 30 teachers show that there are significant challenges in the application of the Contextual Learning model, especially at the Learning Community stage. These findings confirm the complexity of the implementation of contextual learning at the high school level and reveal various factors that affect the effectiveness of its implementation. One of the main challenges identified was the difficulty of teachers in creating a learning environment that supports collaboration and interaction between students. Although the concept of Learning Society is an important component in contextual learning (Hakim et al., 2023). Many teachers report difficulties in managing classroom dynamics that encourage the active participation of all students. As one of the respondents stated, "Creating a productive discussion atmosphere in which all students are actively involved is a major challenge, especially in a classroom with a high diversity of student abilities." These findings are in line with research (Альбовь & Merta, 2023) which identifies teachers' difficulties in integrating real-life contexts into collaborative learning.

Furthermore, this study reveals that time constraints are a significant obstacle in the effective implementation of Learning Communities. Teachers reported difficulties in balancing the demands of completing curriculum materials with the need to allow enough time for students to collaborate and build mutual understanding. This reflects the findings (Ardiyansyah, 2023) which identifies time constraints as one of the main factors that hinder the

implementation of contextual learning. Another challenge revealed is the difficulty in developing relevant and authentic learning tasks that can facilitate the formation of a Learning Community. Some teachers reveal difficulties in designing activities that not only include subject matter but also encourage collaboration and problem-solving in real-world contexts. One respondent stated, "Finding a real problem that is relevant to the subject matter and at the same time interesting for students to discuss together is not easy." These findings reinforce the argument (Shanti et al., 2018) about the importance of considering local contexts in the application of contextual learning.

Another important aspect revealed in this study is the challenge in overcoming the gap in ability and motivation between students in the context of the Learning Community. Some teachers report difficulties in ensuring equal participation of all students, especially in heterogeneous study groups. This often results in the dominance of certain students in group discussions, while other students tend to be passive. These findings show the need for more effective strategies in group formation and group dynamics management in contextual learning. This research also reveals challenges related to technology integration in supporting the Learning Community. While many teachers are aware of the potential of technology to expand the scope of collaboration and access to learning resources, its implementation is often hampered by the limitations of teachers' digital infrastructure and skills. As one respondent expressed, "We want to leverage digital platforms to expand the Learning Community, but internet access constraints and lack of training are the main obstacles." These findings are in line with research (Yusri, 2020) which identified teachers' difficulties in integrating technology into contextual learning.

Furthermore, this study reveals that there are challenges in aligning the concept of the Learning Community with the existing assessment system. Some teachers reported difficulties in developing assessment instruments that could accurately measure individual student contributions in the context of collaborative learning. This often results in a tendency to return to traditional assessment methods that are easier to measure but less aligned with contextual learning principles. Interestingly, the study also reveals a variety of challenges teachers face based on their teaching experience. Teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience tend to report greater difficulties in adapting their teaching styles to support Learning Societies, while younger teachers are generally more flexible but face challenges in classroom management. These findings highlight the importance of ongoing professional development tailored to the specific needs of teachers at different stages of their careers.

In the context of SMA Negeri 1 Tambangan, this study also reveals several contextual factors that affect the implementation of the Learning Community. For example, students' diverse socio-economic backgrounds are often a challenge in creating relevant and meaningful learning experiences for all students. In addition, parents', and society's expectations of measurable learning outcomes (such as test scores) sometimes contradict contextual learning principles that emphasize the process and application of knowledge in real-world contexts. Despite facing various challenges, this study also reveals several innovative strategies developed by teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Tambangan in overcoming these obstacles. Some teachers report success in using the "jigsaw" approach in the formation of study groups, were students alternate roles as "experts" on specific topics. This strategy has proven to be effective in increasing the active participation of all students and reducing the dominance of certain students in group discussions.

This research also reveals the importance of institutional support in the implementation of contextual learning, especially in the aspect of the Learning Community. Some teachers report that school policies that are flexible and support learning innovation are very helpful in overcoming the challenges faced. For example, policies that allow for more flexible scheduling to accommodate long-term collaborative projects have proven effective in supporting the formation of more meaningful Learning Societies. This is in line with the findings (Hamruni, 2015) which emphasizes the importance of administrative support in the implementation of effective contextual learning. Furthermore, this study identifies the crucial role of the community of practice among teachers in overcoming the challenges of implementing the Learning Community. Teachers involved in collaborative forums, both at the school level and between schools, reported improved ability to design and manage effective Learning Community activities. These findings reinforce the argument (Arnseth, 2008) about the importance of situational learning in teacher professional development. In addition, this study also reveals the potential of an interdisciplinary approach in strengthening the relevance and effectiveness of the Learning Community. Some teachers report success in integrating materials from different subjects in collaborative projects, which not only improves student understanding but also broadens the scope of the Learning Community. This is in line with the concept of integrated learning put forward by (Hernawan & Resmini, 2005), which emphasizes the importance of connecting different disciplines to create a more holistic and meaningful learning experience.

Another strategy that has been reported to be effective is the use of community-based projects that involve students in identifying and solving real problems in their neighborhoods. This approach not only strengthens the relevance of learning but also expands the concept of a Learning Community beyond the boundaries of the classroom. One teacher stated, "When students engage in projects that have a direct impact on their communities, their motivation and involvement in learning increases significantly." These findings provide valuable insights into the complexity of the implementation of contextual learning, especially in the aspect of the Learning Community. This research emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in addressing these challenges, which involves not only teacher skill development but also systemic changes in school structure and culture. Effective contextual learning requires a comprehensive transformation in the way we understand and manage the teaching and learning process. In a broader context, the findings of this study make an important contribution to the discussion on education reform in Indonesia. As argued by Siregar (2021), the effective implementation of contextual learning is one of the keys in developing an education system that is responsive to the needs of the 21st century. Therefore, addressing the challenges identified in this study is crucial to improve the overall quality of education.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of the results of this study reveals the complexity of the challenges faced by teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Tambangan in implementing contextual learning, especially in the aspect of the Learning Community. These findings provide valuable insights into the reality of implementing innovative learning approaches at the high school level and highlight the various factors that influence their effectiveness. First, teachers' difficulties in creating an effective collaborative learning environment reflect the fundamental challenge of changing the learning paradigm from a traditional knowledge transmission model to a constructivist model that emphasizes active student participation. This is in line with the Archive (2008) about the importance of social interaction in the construction of knowledge. However, its implementation in diverse classroom contexts has proven challenging. These findings confirm the need for more intensive professional development for teachers, not only in the theoretical aspects of contextual learning, but also in the practical skills of group facilitation and collaborative classroom management (Natural, 2019).

The time constraints identified in this study show that there is a tension between curriculum demands and contextual learning principles. This reflects a broader dilemma in the education system, where the focus on achieving standards and exam preparation often conflicts with a

more holistic and in-depth approach to learning (Mukri et al., n.d.). To address this, systemic reforms are needed that not only touch classroom learning practices, but also curriculum policies and assessment systems at the national level. The challenge of developing relevant and authentic learning tasks highlights the complexity of connecting academic content to real-world contexts. These findings are in line with research (Pg Hj Besar, 2018) about situational learning, which emphasizes the importance of context in the learning process. However, its implementation in a formal school context requires creativity and a deep understanding of both the academic content and the realities of student life. This demonstrates the need for closer collaboration between schools, communities, and the industry sector in designing meaningful learning experiences (Furewati, 2016).

The gap in ability and motivation between students revealed in this study reflects the challenge of inclusivity in contextual learning. These findings confirm the argument (Tomlinson et al., 2003), about the importance of learning differentiation to accommodate the diversity of students. In the context of the Learning Community, this requires a more sophisticated strategy in group formation and facilitation of interaction between students. Approaches such as peer tutoring and reciprocal teaching may be a potential solution to address this challenge (II, 2013). Challenges related to technology integration in supporting the Learning Community show that there is a digital gap that still needs to be overcome. Although technology has great potential to expand the scope of collaboration and access to learning resources (Selim, 2007), its implementation is hampered by the limitations of infrastructure and digital skills. This confirms the need for greater investment in technology infrastructure in schools and the development of digital literacy for both teachers and students (Kim et al., 2013).

The difficulty in aligning the concept of Learning Societies with existing assessment systems reflects broader challenges in measuring complex and contextual learning outcomes. These findings are in line with criticism of traditional assessment systems that tend to emphasize factual knowledge rather than higher-order thinking skills and knowledge applications (Tasrif, 2022). The development of alternative assessment methods, such as performance-based and portfolio-based assessments, is needed that is more aligned with the principles of contextual learning (Priyantha, 2011). The variety of challenges based on teachers' teaching experience shows the complexity of implementing pedagogical change. More experienced teachers may face challenges in adapting practices they have long adopted, while younger teachers may be more flexible but less experienced in classroom management. These findings underscore the importance of a differentiated approach to teacher professional

development, which takes into account each teacher's career stage and specific needs (Munawir et al., 2022).

Contextual factors such as students' socio-economic backgrounds and community expectations revealed in this study highlight the importance of considering local contexts in the implementation of contextual learning. This is in line with the (Zaharah & Silitonga, 2023) about the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. A more nuanced approach is needed in adapting contextual learning principles in accordance with the reality and needs of local communities. Innovative strategies developed by teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Tambangan, such as the "jigsaw" approach and community-based projects, show the potential for creative solutions in overcoming the challenges of implementing the Learning Community. These strategies reflect the principles of active learning and experiential learning put forward by (Name et al., 2021). The success of these strategies emphasizes the importance of empowering teachers as reflective practitioners who are able to adapt and develop learning approaches that are appropriate to their context (Name et al., 2021).

Overall, the findings in this study confirm that the implementation of contextual learning, especially the Learning Community aspect, is a complex process that requires fundamental changes not only in teaching practices, but also in school structure and culture. This is in line with the (Rukajat, 2020) about the complexity of educational change. A systemic approach involving reforms at various levels, from national education policies to practices at the grade level, is needed to optimize the potential of contextual learning in improving the quality of education. In the context of Indonesia's education, these findings have important implications for ongoing education reform efforts. As argued by Wahyudi & Lutfi (2019), contextual learning has great potential in developing student competencies that are relevant to the demands of the 21st century. However, its implementation requires a complete transformation in the way we understand and manage the teaching and learning process. This involves not only developing teacher capacity, but also reforming curriculum, assessment systems, and school structures that support collaborative and contextual learning. In conclusion, the challenges in the implementation of the Learning Community revealed in this study reflect the complexity of changing the educational paradigm. However, innovative strategies developed by teachers show promising potential solutions. Systemic and sustainable support is needed to optimize the implementation of contextual learning and realize its potential in improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals various significant challenges faced by teachers of SMA Negeri 1 Tambangan in implementing contextual learning, especially in the aspect of the Learning Community. The main challenges include difficulties in creating a collaborative learning environment, time constraints, difficulties in designing relevant and authentic learning tasks, gaps in students' abilities and motivation, and barriers in technology integration. Contextual factors such as students' socio-economic backgrounds and societal expectations also play an important role. The study also reveals a variety of challenges based on teachers' teaching experiences, emphasizing the importance of a differentiated approach in professional development. Despite the challenges, some teachers have successfully developed innovative strategies such as "jigsaw" approaches and community-based projects. These findings highlight the complexity of the implementation of contextual learning and the need for a systemic approach in education reform, involving not only changes in teaching practices, but also transformations in school structures and cultures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Professional development of teachers: An intensive and ongoing training program focused on group facilitation skills, collaborative classroom management, and the integration of technology in contextual learning is required.
- Curriculum reform and assessment: It is necessary to review and adjust the curriculum and assessment system to better support the implementation of contextual learning, including the development of alternative assessment methods such as performance-based and portfolio-based assessments.
- Improving technology infrastructure: Investment in technology infrastructure in schools needs to be increased, accompanied by digital literacy development programs for teachers and students.
- Teacher empowerment: Supporting and facilitating teachers as reflective practitioners who can adapt and develop learning approaches according to local contexts.
- Further research: Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the effectiveness of innovative strategies developed by teachers in addressing contextual learning challenges.

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