

The Creativity of Teachers in Implementing Learning Activities at Pesantren-Based Junior High School

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Abstarct

Having multitude of activities amidst of demanding schedule is probably inevitable by students who attend Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren). This is due to the distinctive cultural environment of pesantren, where students engage not only in general studies but also in Islamic subjects. Encountering various psychological condition such as mental exhaustion, even fluctuating motivation, is a common occurrence. As a result, to be a creative genius is necessary for teachers in order to address the challenge while effectively incorporating Islamic values within a creative learning environment. This research employed a qualitative, utilizing a case study research design. This particular case study aimed to explore and describe the creative process undertaken by teachers addressing various learning challenges within a pesantren-based school setting. Teachers from different subjects are involved as the participants. Exploration and collection for information involved conducting interviews and observations. The findings of this study outline the four stages of teacher's creative thinking process when conducting learning activities in a pesantren-based school. These stages are as follows: (1) preparation, which involves creating lesson plans; (2) incubation, where teachers engage in observation, diversion, and contemplation; (3) illumination, characterized by moments of unexpected inspiration and ideas; and (4) verification, when teachers express their creativity by incorporating the inspiration and ideas into actual learning activities. These four stages represent the teachers' creative efforts in conducting learning activities in a pesantren-based school, with the aim of achieving a balanced learning outcome that encompasses practical application (amaliya) of knowledge (ilmiya) in students' daily lives.

Keywords: Teacher's Creativity, Creative Process, Learning, Islamic Boarding School

Introduction

Throughout the learning process, students experienced various psychological conditions such as fluctuating learning motivation (Oktiani, 2017). Students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning depended on the teachers' teaching methods. Students were often uninterested in monotonous teachers. However, several initiatives were taken to resolve the issue. One of the solutions involved leveraging the creative thinking skills that teachers were expected to possess. Through creativity, teachers were highly adaptable to multiple problems that might arise during the learning process (Rindiantika, 2021). Creativity could be explained as a cognitive process or activity that produced a new perspective on a problem and was not limited to pragmatic results (Guilford, 1986; Perkins, 1994; Ward, 2001; Solso et al., 2014). Regarding the creativity of teachers in teaching, several studies have proven that teachers were one of the extrinsic factors determining students' learning outcomes. It has been shown that teachers with high creativity and effective classroom management skills could contribute to the success of the teaching program by developing innovative methods, media, and learning resources to improve students' learning outcomes (Abdullah, 2016; Abidin, 2017; Aminuddin, 2021).

Considering the importance of teacher creativity in the learning process, this study aimed to provide an overview of teachers' creative efforts in implementing learning activities in the context of a pesantren-based junior high school, which had its own distinctive culture. Pesantren-based schools were considered unique because they provided two types of education: a deeper Islamic religious education and general knowledge.

According to Doefier, there were five components that defined the identity of a pesantren-based school, namely the boarding house (asrama), mosque (masjid), study of classical texts, students (santri), and religious scholars (kiai) (Amaly, 2020). The 'kiai' component was what set pesantren-based schools apart from regular schools. The kiai assumed the central role, embodying knowledge, wisdom, charisma, leadership, and taking full responsibility for the existence of the pesantren (Hasan, 2016). The main objective of this study was to explore and illustrate the creativity of teachers in implementing learning activities in pesantren-based schools, following the creative process described by Graham Wallas (1926), which comprised four stages: preparation, formulating a problem, and making initial attempts to solve it; incubation, a phase where no direct action was taken to solve the problem and attention was momentarily diverted to other matters; illumination, gaining insight into the problem; and verification, testing the acquired understanding and developing a solution (Solso, 2014).

Methods

This study was a qualitative research with a case study design. The aim of qualitative research was to study phenomena in their natural environment and seek to interpret or understand them from the perspectives and meanings given by the community (Creswell, 2015). The case study, as part of the qualitative approach, directed researchers to explore one or several limited systems (cases) over time, through detailed and in-depth data collection involving various sources of information such as observation, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents, and reports. The researcher then reported on the description of the case and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007). In the context of education, this case study research was formulated as a descriptive approach to address profound and comprehensive educational issues (Sanjaya, 2013). The research subjects involved teachers from various subjects, including language, mathematics, civic education, physical education, religious education, natural sciences, social sciences, arts, and crafts. Through the case study research, the researcher aimed to explore and describe the stages of the teacher's creative process in implementing teaching at Darul Falah Junior High School in West Bandung Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia.

Findings dan Discussion

The biggest challenge faced by teachers who taught in pesantren-based schools was the strong adherence to Islamic values within the pesantren culture. These schools were guided by the Quran, hadith, classical texts, and religious scholars (kiai) as role models. Therefore, teachers had to be able to make certain adjustments to align with the existing culture. They were expected to integrate Islamic values into their teaching practices creatively. Hence, teacher creativity was necessary to achieve educational goals and ensure that students could understand the learning process comfortably, safely, and happily.

The Lesson Plan

Before conducting a teaching session, teachers created a lesson plan. This plan was a comprehensive document that was formally structured and could be in the form of a mind map, including the use of images or doodles. The plan served as a medium for expressing the ideas and creativity of teachers in delivering the lesson and helped them understand the flow and objectives of the teaching process. In essence, the plan served as a guide or a "compass" that determined the direction of the teaching. This lesson implementation plan represented the initial effort made by teachers as the first stage in the creative process, known as preparation.

Observation, Diversion, and Contemplation

Outside of teaching activities, teachers were accustomed to observing the lives and environment of their students. From these observations, it was known that students often experienced boredom in learning, mainly due to their extensive Islamic religious studies activities. Moreover, students' movement was generally limited by rules that prohibited them from leaving the pesantren environment unless it was for urgent matters. These observations served as stimuli for teachers to think creatively and provide solutions to the challenges faced by students. In addition to observation, teachers also engaged in personal activities outside their profession as educators, such as spending time with family, discussing with colleagues, pursuing hobbies, visiting specific places, reading books, accessing information through social media or the internet, and so on.

Each teacher engaged in contemplation in their own way as a means of processing information and experiences. These activities corresponded to the incubation stage in the creative process, where teachers did not directly attempt to solve problems but temporarily diverted their attention to other matters.

Emergence of Inspiration

Inspiration and ideas often arose in unexpected moments and situations. These ideas were wild in nature, so teachers needed to capture them through writing or other means that aligned with their individual characteristics. These ideas served as the foundation for determining teaching methods, developing teaching materials and media, as well as addressing various psychological conditions experienced by students. In the creative process, the emergence of inspiration represented the illumination stage, where teachers gained profound insights and understanding of the challenges they faced.

Expressing Creativity

The expression of teacher creativity emerged through the execution and implementation of new ideas in the implementation of learning activities. This expression took the form of the teacher's presentation when about to teach, the demeanor of the teacher in classroom management, the development of methods, materials, and learning media, and so on. Through the expression of creativity by teachers, a more varied, enjoyable, and enthusiastic learning environment was created, leading to the achievement of learning objectives. Teachers then evaluated the new ideas that had been implemented in these learning activities. If these ideas were found to be unsuccessful, teachers sought alternative solutions. The expression and evaluation conducted by teachers represented the verification stage, where teachers tested the understanding they had gained and developed solutions.

Conclusion

High creativity is highly necessary for teachers in pesantren-based schools. In these types of schools, teachers must be able to integrate Islamic values into creative teaching to achieve learning objectives and strike a balance between religious practices and academic knowledge in students. The four stages of the creative process carried out by teachers in pesantren-based schools are as follows: (1) preparation, by creating a plan for implementing learning activities; (2) incubation, through observation, diversion, and contemplation; (3) illumination, when inspiration and ideas emerge unexpectedly; and (4) verification, when teacher express creativity through inspiration and new ideas in the implementation of learning activities.

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