

ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXTUAL APPROACH (CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING) IN IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Accepted: April 26 2026

Abstract : The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach is a learning approach that discusses lesson material with students' real lives so that learning becomes more meaningful. This article aims to analyze the application of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in improving student learning outcomes. The method used in writing this article is a literature study by examining several sources such as journals, books, and research that are relevant to the CTL approach in learning. The results of the study show that the application of the CTL approach can increase student activity in the learning process, help students understand concepts more deeply, and improve student learning outcomes. This is because in the CTL approach, students do not only receive material passively, but are also directly involved in the process of discovering and linking knowledge with everyday experiences. Thus, the Contextual Teaching and Learning approach can be an effective alternative to improve the quality of learning and student learning outcomes.

Keywords: Contextual Teaching and Learning, contextual learning, student learning outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential process in shaping students so that they possess the ability to confront different challenges in life. In a good learning process, the focus goes beyond the passing of material by the teacher and is able to engage students actively so that they can learn better. A learning approach that connects the lesson material to students' real experiences is needed in order to make learning more relevant. But practically, many traditional ways to learn still exist in the classroom, where the teacher takes over teaching the material and the pupils are just passive recipients of the knowledge. This condition frequently leads students to perform less with learning and struggle to comprehend what they are learning. It has led to poor learning outcomes for students. As such, a more authentic and context-based way of learning is required for students. An approach that can

be employed is Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). The Contextual Teaching and Learning approach is a learning process that teachers recommend for helping students understand the meaning of lesson material by linking the material with their real life context (Elaine B. Johnson, 2002). This way, not only can students remember the content, but they can also recognize it that can be used in their daily lives as well. Furthermore, as per Nurhadi (2003), the Contextual Teaching and Learning approach is a learning theory, which focuses on the connection between the content of each study and the actual situation faced by the students in life, so that the students can construct knowledge on their own through the practice of meaningful learning. Students must be active in the learning process through discovering, collaborating, discussing and solving problems. Using a Contextual Teaching and Learning approach, students are expected to be able to comprehend learning principles more simply because the content being taught can be applied to their lives directly. So that students get more active and more driven to learn, a potentially positive change that has an effect on learning outcomes as well.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXTUAL APPROACH (CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING) IN IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is an instructional approach that emphasizes the connection between learning materials and real-life situations experienced by students. Through this approach, learning extends beyond teacher-centered instruction, encouraging students to actively understand and apply knowledge in their daily lives. As a result, learning becomes more meaningful and effective compared to conventional, formal methods. According to Elaine B. Johnson (2002), CTL is a learning process that enables students to grasp the relevance of academic content by linking it to personal, social, and cultural contexts. This means that students not only memorize concepts but also learn to relate them to various real-world situations. Similarly, Nurhadi (2003) explains that CTL helps teachers connect instructional content to students' real-life experiences, making learning more applicable and meaningful.

At the implementation level, CTL encourages students to actively construct their own understanding through exploration and experience, rather than passively receiving information. This approach incorporates key components such as constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning communities, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment. These elements promote active participation, allowing students to engage deeply with the material. Furthermore, Trianto (2007) states that CTL supports meaningful learning by involving students in activities such as discussion, observation, and questioning, especially in contexts related to their everyday lives. This process enhances student engagement and

helps them better understand the subject matter. By connecting new knowledge with prior experiences, CTL strengthens students' comprehension and improves learning outcomes. It also increases motivation, as students perceive the relevance of what they learn to their personal lives. These meaningful connections encourage greater participation and engagement in the learning process. In conclusion, CTL is an effective approach that promotes meaningful, relevant, and student-centered learning. It bridges the gap between academic content and real-world application, thereby improving both the learning process and student achievement.

ADVANTAGES OF THE CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING (CTL) APPROACH

The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach is a learning approach that emphasizes the relationship between lesson material and students' real lives. Through this approach, students do not only receive information passively, but are also invited to actively discover and understand concepts through the experiences they have in everyday life. By linking learning to real contexts, the learning process becomes more meaningful and easier for students to understand. According to Elaine B. Johnson (2002), the Contextual Teaching and Learning approach has several advantages that can support the creation of an effective and meaningful learning process for students.

Learning becomes more meaningful, the CTL approach makes the learning process more meaningful because the material being studied is not only delivered theoretically, but is also connected to students' real lives. According to Johnson (2002), meaningful learning occurs when students are able to relate the knowledge they acquire in school to the experiences they encounter in everyday life. In this way, students do not just memorize the lesson material, but truly understand the concepts learned so that the knowledge can be used in real situations. Increasing students' active involvement in learning, the CTL approach encourages students to be more active in the learning process. In learning activities, students not only listen to the teacher's explanation, but also participate in various activities such as discussing, asking questions, observing, and solving problems. According to Johnson (2002), active student involvement is very important because through these activities students can construct their own knowledge that they learn. With active involvement, the learning process becomes livelier and more interactive.

Helping students understand concepts more deeply, through the CTL approach, students learn by directly experiencing the learning process. For example, through observation

activities, experiments, discussions, or case studies related to real life. Johnson (2002) explains that learning that is linked to real experiences will help students understand concepts more deeply. This is because students do not only receive information passively, but also experience the learning process themselves.

Developing students' critical thinking skills: The CTL approach can also help develop students' critical thinking skills. During the learning process, students are encouraged to analyze various problems related to everyday life. Johnson (2002) states that through these activities, students are trained to think logically, analyze information, and find solutions to problems. Thus, students not only understand the subject matter but are also able to use that knowledge to solve problems. **Increasing student learning motivation.** Learning that is connected to real life can make students feel that what they are learning has benefits for their lives. According to Johnson (2002), when students realize that the subject matter is related to everyday life, their interest and motivation to learn will increase. Students will be more enthusiastic about participating in learning because they feel the learning is relevant to their needs.

Encouraging collaboration among students. In the CTL approach, learning activities are often conducted through group work or discussions. This allows students to exchange ideas, collaborate, and help each other understand the subject matter. Johnson (2002) explains that collaboration in learning can help students develop social skills such as respecting others' opinions, communicating effectively, and working in teams.

Helping students remember material longer: Learning that is linked to real-life experiences is more easily remembered than learning that is simply rote. Johnson (2002) states that when students learn through direct experience and connections to everyday life, the information they acquire is easier to understand and store in long-term memory. This makes student learning outcomes more lasting. **Developing student learning independence:** The CTL approach can also help foster an independent learning attitude. During the learning process, students are encouraged to seek information, discover concepts, and solve problems independently. According to Johnson (2002), learning that provides students with opportunities to discover knowledge for themselves will help them become independent learners. This way, students are less reliant on teacher explanations to understand the subject matter.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING (CTL) APPROACH

The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach has several advantages in helping students understand learning material more meaningfully by connecting it to real-life situations. However, when applied in the classroom, this approach also has several limitations. Several obstacles can arise from the teacher, students, and the learning environment at school. Therefore, teachers need to understand the shortcomings of this approach to anticipate potential obstacles that may arise during the learning process.

According to Wina Sanjaya (2006), there are several shortcomings in implementing the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in the learning process, including the following.

Requires longer learning time. The CTL approach requires more time in the learning process because students not only receive material from the teacher but also must engage in various activities such as discussions, observations, and problem-solving. This process requires time for students to deeply understand the concepts. Demanding a high level of teacher preparedness and creativity, CTL implementation requires teachers to be able to design creative learning and relate subject matter to students' real-life situations. If teachers lack the preparedness or creativity to design learning, the implementation of this approach may be less than optimal.

Not all material is easily connected to real life. Some lesson materials have concepts that are so abstract that they are difficult to directly relate to students' everyday experiences. This can be a barrier for teachers in implementing the CTL approach to its full potential.

Requiring adequate facilities and learning resources, the CTL approach often utilizes the surrounding environment or various learning media as learning resources. If facilities and learning resources at school are limited, implementing this approach can be hampered.

Not all students are accustomed to active learning. CTL requires students to be active in the learning process, such as discussing, asking questions, and expressing opinions. However, in reality, not all students have the courage or habit to actively participate in learning activities.

Classroom management becomes more challenging, because it involves various student activities such as group work and discussions, teachers must be able to manage the class well so that the learning process remains conducive and focused. Learning assessment has become more complex. In the CTL approach, teachers assess not only students' learning outcomes but also their learning processes. This necessitates the use of various assessment

techniques, such as observation, performance assessment, and portfolios, which require more time and precision.

COMPARISON OF THE CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING (CTL) APPROACH WITH CONVENTIONAL LEARNING

In education, teachers use various learning approaches to achieve learning objectives. One widely used and developed approach is Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). This approach is often compared to conventional teacher-centered learning. This comparison is important to understand the differences in characteristics, advantages, and limitations of each approach in improving student learning outcomes.

According to Elaine B. Johnson (2002), CTL is an approach that connects course material to students' real lives, making learning more meaningful. This is a key difference from conventional learning, which generally emphasizes direct delivery of material through lectures. Differences in the Roles of Teachers and Students: In the CTL approach, students are the center of learning (student-centered). Teachers act as facilitators, guides, and directors, helping students discover concepts. Students are encouraged to actively ask questions, discuss, collaborate, and solve problems. In contrast, in conventional learning, teachers dominate the learning process. Teachers deliver material directly, while students tend to listen and take notes. As a result, interaction in learning is more limited compared to CTL.

Differences in the Learning Process: In CTL, the learning process is carried out by linking material to students' real-life contexts. Students learn through direct experience, observation, group discussions, and exploration activities. This approach emphasizes the process of discovery (inquiry). In contrast, in conventional learning, the learning process focuses more on the delivery of information by the teacher. Material is usually presented systematically through lectures, simple questions and answers, and assignments. This process tends to be more structured but provides fewer opportunities for students to actively explore.

In terms of developing thinking skills, the CTL approach emphasizes the development of higher-order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving. Students are trained to connect concepts to real-world situations, thus optimally developing

their thinking skills. In contrast, conventional learning emphasizes mastery of material and memorization. While it can still improve students' knowledge, opportunities for developing critical thinking skills are often more limited than with CTL.

Differences in terms of student motivation and engagement: CTL tends to increase student motivation because the material being studied is relevant to everyday life. When students understand the benefits of the material being studied, they become more interested and enthusiastic in participating in the learning process. In conventional learning, student motivation is highly dependent on the teacher's teaching method. If the method used is less engaging, student engagement can be low because they tend to be more passive.

Differences in Learning Outcomes: The CTL approach has the potential to improve learning outcomes because students understand concepts deeply and are able to apply them in real-life situations. Meaningful learning helps students retain material for longer periods of time. Conventional learning can also improve learning outcomes, particularly in mastering basic material. However, if not combined with active learning methods, student learning outcomes may be limited to cognitive aspects without developing other skills.

Relative Strengths and Weaknesses: CTL's strength lies in its active, meaningful, and student-experience-oriented nature. However, this approach requires more time, thorough preparation, and a high level of teacher creativity. Meanwhile, conventional learning has advantages in terms of time efficiency and ease of implementation. However, this approach provides less space for students to actively participate in learning.

Based on this comparison, it can be concluded that the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach has advantages in creating active, meaningful learning, and is able to improve student learning outcomes and thinking skills. Compared to conventional learning, CTL is more oriented towards student engagement and holistic competency development. However, the success of CTL implementation still depends on teacher readiness, the learning strategies used, and the learning environment at school.

CONCLUSION

Based on the entire discussion above, it can be concluded that the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach is a learning approach that emphasizes the connection between subject matter and students' real-life situations. The analytical description section explains that CTL aims to create learning that is not solely teacher-centered but also provides

students with opportunities to understand, relate, and apply knowledge in their daily lives. This approach is supported by expert opinion, which states that contextual learning helps students discover the meaning of the material they learn through real-life experiences.

In the advantages section, it is known that CTL has various benefits in the learning process, such as making learning more meaningful, increasing active student involvement, helping in-depth understanding of concepts, developing critical thinking skills, increasing learning motivation, encouraging collaboration, helping students' memory, and developing learning independence. These advantages show that CTL is able to create a more interactive learning atmosphere and is oriented towards developing students' competencies as a whole.

However, the disadvantages section explains that implementing CTL also presents several challenges. This approach requires longer learning times, high teacher preparedness and creativity, good classroom management, and adequate facilities and learning resources. Furthermore, not all lesson material can be easily linked to real-life situations, requiring teachers to develop specialized skills in designing learning. Assessment in CTL is also more complex because it focuses not only on final results but also on the student's learning process.

Comparing CTL with conventional learning, it's clear that CTL emphasizes student-centered learning, while conventional learning is more teacher-centered. CTL provides more space for students to be active, think critically, discuss, and relate the material to real-life experiences. Meanwhile, conventional learning tends to be more efficient in delivering material but provides fewer opportunities for students to be actively involved.

Overall, based on the four discussions above, it can be concluded that the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach is an effective learning strategy for improving the quality of the learning process and student learning outcomes. CTL is able to create active, meaningful, and real-life learning, while also supporting the development of students' thinking skills and independence. Although there are several limitations in its application, the advantages of this approach indicate that CTL is worthy of use as an alternative learning model to improve the quality of education, especially in elementary schools. The success of CTL implementation still depends on teacher readiness, the strategies used, and a supportive learning environment.

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