

# THE INTRODUCTION OF CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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## ***Abstract***

*Having a good atmosphere in the teaching learning process is essential . When students feel convenient with their class, they will be able to accept the transfer of knowledge easily. However, many teachers face difficulties in finding a good teaching approach when teaching islamic education to their students. To deal with issue, the researcher proposes the use of constructivism approach in Islamic education classroom. Constructivism is a teaching approach which states that students learn best when they actively construct their knowledge based on their prior knowledge. One of the advantages of constructivism is it encourages students to have social and communication skills in a classroom environment. Even though, there are some challenges that teachers might face in implementing this approach, by following recommendations suggested by the experts, the researcher believed that this approach will be helpful for teachers to gain success in their classroom.*

**Keywords :** *Constuctivism, Approach, Students, Teachers, Islamic Education*

## ***Abstrak***

*Mendapatkan lingkungan yang nyaman dalam proses belajar- mengajar adalah penting. Ketika mahasiswa merasa nyaman dengan kelas mereka, mereka akan mampu menerima proses transfer ilmu dengan mudah. Akan tetapi, banyak guru menghadapi masalah dalam menemukan pendekatan pengajaran ketika mengajar pendidikan islam kepada siswa-siswa mereka. Untuk mengatasi permasalahan ini, peneliti mengusulkan penggunaan pendekatan konstruktivisme dalam kelas pendidikan Islam. Konstruktivisme adalah sebuah pendekatan pengajaran yang menekankan bahwa siswa belajar dengan baik ketika mereka secara aktif mendapatkan ilmu pengetahuan dengan menghubungkan kepada pengetahuan mereka sebelumnya. Salah satu keuntungan dari konstruktivisme adalah ianya mendorong siswa untuk memiliki keterampilan dalam berkomunikasi sosial didalam kelas yang mana mereka dapat bertukar ide dan pikiran. Meskipun, ada beberapa tantangan yang dihadapi guru dalam menerapkan pendekatan ini, namun dengan mengikuti sejumlah rekomendasi yang disarankan oleh para ahli, peneliti berkeyakinan bahwa pendekatan ini akan membantu para guru agar mereka sukses dalam mengajar.*

**Kata kunci:** *Konstruktivisme, Pendekatan, siswa, guru, pendidikan Islam*

## A. Introduction

In Islam, the terms education is derived from the Arabic words „ilm“ and *ta“alim“* respectively. The word „ilm“ is a verbal noun of the root verb „alima“. Literally, „alima“ means „he knew and he was acquainted with“. The active participle, „aalim“ (pl., „ulamaa“, „aalimun“), means someone who knows and the past participle, *ma“lum* denotes an object known (Thungu, *et al.*, 2008). According to Saman (2004), Islamic education is a set of concepts and tenets pertaining to human nature, intellect, and attitude, along with spiritual and physical values based on the Holy Quran and the Prophet’s Sunnah. Through Islamic education, individuals are educated and cultured following an all-encompassing method that involves all aspects mentioned, without compromising any, or giving primacy of one over the other. Nevertheless, many Islamic education classrooms look typical of a traditional classroom where the teacher is the only one teaching and students are expected to take notes, memorize, and reproduce everything they have learned when they are assessed. This style works great for some students, but for many it drives them to boredom leading them to disengage from the subject and the teacher. Therefore, students need to move, they need to feel excited, they need to have discussions, and be intellectually engaged with Islam, only then Islamic education will truly be a life-changing experience for them.

Educational experts believe that

one of the first things a teacher must do when considering how to teach students is to acknowledge that each student does not learn in the same way. This means that if the teacher chooses just one style of teaching (direct instruction, collaborative learning, inquiry learning, etc.), the students will not be maximizing their learning potential. They also believe that in order to have a good atmosphere in the class, a teacher should create a paradigm which attempts to make students more creative and energetic. As a result, students are able to interact with others, to start learning which leads them to build a cooperative interaction, and to work interdisciplinary. In Islamic education classroom, teachers should realize that a good atmosphere in class will be achievable if teachers and students are willing to make changes in their teaching-learning process. When students have felt the changes, the teaching-learning process in the class will enable students to think and to demonstrate their abilities.

Since all sensory input is organized by the person receiving the stimuli, it cannot always be directly transferred from the teacher to the student. This means that a teacher who teaches Islamic education cannot transfer information into a student’s brain and always expect them to process it and apply it correctly later. Also a teacher cannot reach every student on the same level during one lesson. Implementing a variety of learning styles throughout the course allows all the students to have chances to learn in at least one way that matches their learning style. For this

consideration, the researcher proposes the use of constructivism approach in islamic education classroom.

## **B. Constructive Learning in Islamic Education Classroom**

According to Glasersfeld (1995), there are two main aspects of constructivism. First, learning is a process of knowledge construction instead of absorption. We construct knowledge based on our own perceptions and conceptions of our world; therefore, each of us constructs a different meaning or concept. Learning occurs only when the students are actively involved in the construction and reorganization of concepts. Second, knowledge is strongly related to the environment in which the student experiences and constructs the knowledge. In other words, understanding is indexed by experience. Thus, constructivists emphasize cognitive experience in authentic activities. The context need not be the real world of work, however, to be authentic; rather, learning activities should employ the type of tasks that are the ordinary practices of the culture.

Moreover, constructivist teaching in islamic education classroom is focused on how learning occurs. Caine and Caine (1991) proposed that there are 12 principles that need to be considered when implementing constructivist approach :

1. The brain is a parallel processor which continually processes many different types of information, including thoughts, emotions, and

cultural knowledge.

2. The teaching -learning process engages the entire physiology of students. Therefore, teachers can't address just the intellect.
3. The teaching-learning process recognizes that students' understandings are based on their own unique experiences.
4. The search for meaning occurs through 'patterning'. Effective teaching connects isolated ideas and information with global concepts and themes.
5. Emotions are essential to patterning. Learning is influenced by emotions, feelings, and attitudes.
6. The brain processes parts and wholes simultaneously. People have difficulty learning when either parts or wholes are overlooked.
7. Learning involves both focused attention and perception which is influenced by the
8. environment, culture, and climate.
9. Learning always involves conscious and unconscious processes. Hence, students need time to process how and what they have learned.
10. Teaching promote spatial, experienced learning and inhibit understanding.
11. It is important to note that the best thing to understand and remember best when facts and skills are embedded in natural, spatial memory .
12. The classroom atmosphere is

challenging but not threatening to students.

13. Since the each brain is unique, teaching must be multifaceted to allow students to express preferences.

### C. Difference between Traditional Classroom and Constructivist Classroom

Bada and Olusegun (2015) stated that the focus of islamic education should shift from the teacher to the students in costructivist classroom. The classroom itself is no longer a place where the teacher

become an expert who pours knowledge into passive students, who wait like empty vessels to be filled. Also, the students are urged to be actively involved in their own process of learning. The teacher functions more as a facilitator who coaches, mediates, prompts, and helps students develop and assess their understanding, and thereby their learning. Both teachers and students think of knowledge as a dynamic, everchanging view of the world we live in and the ability to successfully stretch and explore that view. The chart below compares the traditional classroom to the constructivist approach (Bada & Olusegun, 2015).

| <b>Traditional Classroom</b>  | <b>Constructivist Classroom</b>  |
|---|--|
| Curriculum begins with the part of the whole.Emphasizes basic skill             | Curriculum emphasizes big concepts,beginning with the whole and expanding to include the parts.                          |
| Strict adherence to fixed curriculum is highly valued.                          | Pursuit of students questions and interests is valued.   |
| Materials are primarily textbooks and workbooks.                                | Materials include primary sources of materials and manipulative materials.   |
| Learning is based on repetition.  | Learning is interactive,building on what the students already knows.   |
| Teachers disseminate information to students. They are recipients of knowledge. | Teachers have a dialogue with students,helping students construct their own knowledge                                    |
| Teachers' role is directive,rooted in authority.                                | Teachers' role is interactive,rooted in negotiation.   |
| Assessment is through testing,correct answers.                                  | Assessment includes students works,observations,and points of view,as well as tests. Process is as important as product. |
| Knowledge is seen as inert.   | Knowledge is seen as dynamic,ever changing with our experiences.   |
| Students work primarily alone.  | Students work primarily in groups.   |

#### **D. Teachers' Role in implementing Constructivist Approach**

In islamic education classroom, teachers are challenged to provide teaching techniques that support students' construction of their understanding. Teachers need to make the concepts and phenomena interesting and important to the students. Besides, the teacher should ask questions and listen carefully to students' interpretations of the data and push students to think as clearly as they can about their ideas. In addition, the teacher should perceive errors as the results of the learners' conceptions for the moment, because at that moment that is what makes sense to the student.

To modify students' misconceptions in learning islamic education, the teacher will need to give an explanation as to how the students have arrived at their answers and ask questions or provide a different presentation to allow the students to discover their errors and construct the correct concept . By allowing students to work on the objects, the concepts become visible, as do the misconceptions. Students may discover their misconceptions themselves because their designs do not make sense even to them.

According to Brooks (1993),there are several things that a teacher can do in constructivist classroom. First, constructivist teachers should value students' points of view. Realizing what students' think about understanding about lesson that may helps teachers formulate

classroom lessons and differentiate instruction on the basis of students' needs and interests.Second, constructivist teachers structure lessons to challenge students' ideas. Students come to the classroom with their own experiences that shape their views about how their worlds work. When teachers allow students to construct knowledge that challenges their current ideas, learning occurs. Only through challenging students what they think they know and why they think they know it are teachers able to confront their ideas.Third, constructivist teachers should recognize that students must attach relevance to the curriculum. If the curriculum seems relevance in their daily activities, their interest in learning grows.Fourth, constructivist teachers should formulate lessons around big ideas, not small bits of information. Exposing students to wholes first helps them determine the relevant parts as they refine their understandings of the wholes.Finally, constructivist teachers should be able to assess student learning in the context of daily classroom activities , not as separate events because it will boost their intelligence,creativity, accountability,and knowledge.

#### **E. How Constructivism Views Students' Role in Islamic Education Classroom**

Perkins (1992) stated that constructivist approach usually confronts learners with construction kits which are complex and challenging. Most constructivism instruction intentionally

resents learners with situations that make them examine their existing knowledge and structures, forcing them to reorganize and construct new models. The students are responsible for defending, proving, justifying, and communicating their ideas to the classroom. These types of tasks place a cognitive demand on the learners. As a result, students are able simply to memorize the content and repeat it on tests and assignments.

Moreover, students are asked to take on more responsibility for task management than in conventional instruction. This shift of responsibility is necessary if students are to become independent thinkers and learners. Students are supposed to do the hard work of constructing their understanding and taking on the responsibility of managing their learning. From the students' perspective, they are being asked to discover concepts for themselves when they thought that they would be told the concepts, do some exercises, and move on. The constructivism asks students to think both about the concept and the process of learning the concepts, and many students may not buy in to the teaching approach.

#### **F. Some Challenges in Implementing Constructivist Approach in Islamic Education Classroom**

Although constructivism is assumed to be a great method to help teachers in Islamic education class, there are several challenges in implementing this approach. Firstly, the difficulty of implementing constructivist approach is assumed greater

than that of traditional approach (Maclsaac & Falconer, 2002). The reason is that the success of constructivist approach depends on frequent responses from students, which are not easy to obtain. Secondly, the limits of a perspective on teaching that values students' understandings at the expense of right answers. Also, students' knowledge becomes individual. For instance, 10 different students may arrive at 10 different understandings or interpretations of a concept of which all are not equally appropriate. When this case happens, constructivism may lead to the rejection of this approach. Thirdly, the students taught using constructivist approach were also found to have a deeper comprehension of the learning process and outcomes, and as a result, became more critical than those in traditional classes. However, the outcomes of promoting the students' cognitive commitment in one aspect may result in the students being more critical in another. The students' criticisms/suggestions, such as requesting the integration of several concepts in designing examination questions, may be rarely found amongst students used to traditional teaching.

#### **G. Some Suggestions in to deal with Challenges**

According to Kamal (2004), there are some recommendations that are surely believed can help teachers. First, teachers should keep teaching their students when communicating with their students in order to improve students understanding in Islamic education. Teachers can share their

ideas and problems through this discussion club. As a result, their understanding and confidence will be improved.

Second, Islamic education should always emphasize on functions and application. This means that teachers should make sure that students really understand how they teach Islamic education effectively. Finally, although teachers do not have authority to change the curriculum, it is important for them to be creative teachers who can provide instructions based on students' preferences and needs. In addition, Sleeter (2009) has proposed some practical strategies for teachers to deal with challenges when implementing constructivism in the classroom.

1. The teachers need a repertoire of cultural knowledge of the students. Teachers can learn to work with students and include the students' knowledge in the curriculum and instruction.
2. The teachers can benefit from dialogues with students from different cultures. Teaching profiles based on students' narratives can be constructed for the teachers to reflect upon and as references for pedagogical design and classroom management.
3. The teachers need to spend time and make an effort to learn more about multicultural topics as well as working with students from cultures different from their own.
4. The teachers need to be aware of

any issues that might threaten the teaching-learning process.

## H. Conclusion

Educational experts believe that in order to have a good atmosphere in the class, a teacher should create a teaching method that attempts to make students more creative and energetic. They believe that constructivism can be a method that helps teachers to achieve their purposes in the teaching-learning process. One of the advantages of constructivism is it can offer a transition from conventional educational processes to the modern educational processes. In this method, teachers' roles are as facilitators that guide their students' work. For students, this method encourages them to play active roles in assimilating knowledge with their existing knowledge and to respect the different ideas that might arise among themselves. Even though, there are some challenges that teachers might face in implementing this method, by following suggestions suggested by experts, it is believed that this method can be a good one for teachers to use in teaching their students.

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