

# Learning Strategies for Islamic Religious Education: Pedagogical Switching Between Mental Discipline and Constructivist Learning at Daarul Mansur Islamic Boarding School

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to investigate the implementation of Islamic Education (PAI) Tauhid learning strategies at Daarul Mansur Wanayasa Islamic Boarding School, addressing a critical gap in understanding how constructivist learning theory is applied in junior high school settings. The research seeks new insights into the effectiveness and dynamics of classroom learning strategies, contributing to a deeper understanding of learning theory application in Islamic educational institutions.

**Design/Methodology/Approach** – The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing direct classroom observation as the primary methodology. Data were collected from a junior high school class consisting of 15 students during a 2 x 40-minute PAI Tauhid lesson. Observers documented teacher-student interactions, learning activities, and strategy implementation, and data were analyzed descriptively to identify the application of learning theories, particularly constructivism and mental discipline.

**Findings** – The results reveal that PAI Tauhid learning strategies integrate both mental discipline and constructivist approaches. Teacher-centered explanations reinforced knowledge, while group exercises and discussions promoted active student participation and cognitive development. These findings indicate that combining multiple learning theories can enhance student understanding and engagement, confirming the importance of adaptive teaching strategies in religious education.

**Originality/Value** – This research offers a novel perspective on the application of learning theories in Islamic boarding school contexts, providing valuable insights into how constructivist principles can be effectively integrated with traditional teaching methods. The study contributes to the advancement of educational practice in Islamic schooling and highlights implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and future research on effective pedagogical strategies.

**Keywords:** PAI Learning Observation, Islamic Education Teaching Strategies, Constructivist Approach, Tauhid, Classroom Pedagogy

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Observation is a fundamental method in educational research, derived from the Latin term meaning “to see” and “to pay attention” (Anon., 2011). It involves accurately recording phenomena and considering the relationships between various aspects of the observed events. The main purpose of observation in educational contexts is to describe the learning environment, activities, participants, and the meaning of events from the perspective of those involved. A strong, factual, and systematic description is essential for drawing meaningful conclusions about teaching and learning processes (Husamah, 2018).

Studying learning theories without classroom observation often limits understanding to a theoretical framework. Classroom observation provides practical insights into how these theories are implemented in real educational settings. In the context of Islamic Education (PAI), understanding how

teaching strategies are applied, particularly for Tauhid, is crucial in aligning theoretical knowledge with pedagogical practice. Observing these strategies can help identify the integration of different learning theories, such as behaviorism, mental discipline, cognitive, humanistic, cultural, and constructivist approaches (Wibowo, 2012).

PAI learning involves multiple domains, including Tauhid, Qur'an-Hadith, Fiqh, and SKI. However, teaching often rotates between these domains, creating challenges for continuity and depth of learning. Observations of classroom practice allow researchers to identify how teachers structure lessons, engage students, and apply learning theories to optimize cognitive, affective, and psychomotor outcomes (Husamah, 2018; Wibowo, 2012).

This study aims to observe the implementation of PAI Tauhid learning strategies at Daarul Mansur Wanayasa Islamic Boarding School, with a focus on identifying how constructivist learning theory is applied in the classroom. The objectives include: Documenting the learning process and classroom activities, Identifying the types of learning theories applied by the teacher, Analyzing the effectiveness of integrated teaching strategies in promoting student understanding and engagement.

The observation is limited to a single face-to-face PAI Tauhid session in a junior high school class. The scope is deliberately focused to allow detailed analysis of teacher-student interactions, instructional strategies, and application of learning theories. Initially, the observation was non-participatory, evolving into minimal participatory observation, where observers interacted with students only to clarify learning tasks or prompt discussions, without directly influencing learning outcomes. This approach aligns with standard observational methodology in educational research (Anon., 2011).

Observing classroom practice bridges the gap between theory and practice, providing empirical evidence of how learning strategies are implemented in Islamic educational contexts. Insights from this study can inform teacher training, curriculum development, and educational policy in Islamic boarding schools. Moreover, understanding the integration of constructivist and traditional learning methods can enhance student engagement, cognitive development, and religious understanding, providing a model for effective PAI instruction (Husamah, 2018; Wibowo, 2012).

## **II. METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The study involved 15 Grade VII students with a 2 x 40-minute session. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

The research was conducted on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, in a junior high school class (Grade VII) at Daarul Mansur Wanayasa Islamic Boarding School, Purwakarta. The class consisted of 15 students, and the learning session lasted 2 x 40 minutes. The teacher observed was Ustadz Muhammad Hasin, teaching PAI subjects including Tauhid, Qur'an-Hadith, Fiqh, and SKI.

Data were collected through direct classroom observation, supplemented by field notes, video recordings, and relevant teaching documents (e.g., student handouts, syllabus copies, and attendance sheets). Observers employed both non-participatory and minimally participatory observation techniques, allowing them to record interactions and classroom activities without significantly influencing the learning process (Anon., 2011). Minimal participation included asking guiding questions during group activities and assisting students in understanding tasks without providing answers.

## **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

The group observation activity was conducted to fulfill an assignment for the PAI Learning Theory course. Observation is categorized as one of the contextual-actual learning models. Conducting the observation provided a realistic picture of specific situations and conditions. Classroom learning observations provide additional insights for the observer group regarding PAI teaching practices in schools.

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, the observation method used by the observer group was participant observation, which involves immersing oneself in the learning situation. During the observation activity, the observer group recorded the learning process and documented the learning activities. Recording aims to capture all aspects of the learning process. Learning documentation is carried out by recording the learning process in the classroom using a video camera

and by collecting learning documents, such as the syllabus, handouts (obtained by photocopying the students' textbooks), and student attendance lists. The following is a description of the observation conducted by the observer group::

1. Location and time of the observation.

The observation was conducted at the Daarul Mansur Islamic Boarding School in Wanayasa, located at Sukadami Village on the Purwakarta–Wanayasa Highway in Purwakarta. The class observed was the 7th grade, with 15 students.

The observation took place on Wednesday, September 3, 2025, during the second class period, from 10:10 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. One class session consists of two class periods, or 1 x 40 minutes.

2. Aspects related to the observation.

The subject teacher observed was Ustadz Muhammad Hasin in the Islamic Education (PAI) subject, covering Tawhid, the Qur'an and Hadith, and Fiqh.

Before and after the classroom observation, the observer group also conducted interviews with the subject teacher. It was noted that PAI instruction has not yet been implemented in an integrated manner. PAI instruction covers five academic fields, including Tawhid, Qur'an and Hadith, Fiqh, and SKI. Instruction for each academic field is conducted on a rotating basis every two class sessions. This means that if one academic field is covered over two sessions, the subsequent sessions are scheduled in the same alternating pattern. The following is an explanation in table form:

The subject teachers also acknowledged that this scheduling of face-to-face sessions makes learning less effective and efficient because the presentation of material becomes disjointed and must be interrupted for other academic fields. It was also mentioned that students experience learning difficulties when the learning objectives from the previous session have not been met, even though the students have not yet mastered the learning indicators and competencies.

3. Challenges and obstacles.

During the observations, the teacher honestly admitted that he had not yet prepared a Lesson Plan (RPP); therefore, no Lesson Plan is included in the appendix of this report. Lesson Plans play a crucial role in teaching activities, as they outline the preparation, implementation, and assessment of the learning process. However, this did not pose a significant problem in the observation activities conducted. Therefore, in the results of this group's observation, the elaboration of the RPP does not originate from an RPP owned and prepared by the teacher, but rather constitutes a reflection of the findings from the observations made regarding the observed learning process.

The reflection in question is a description of the learning process that will be described in a coherent, systematic, and comprehensive manner, consistent with the observations carried out. This implies a shift in terminology—it is not an RPP (not a plan) but a narrative description of the actual implementation of the learning process. The aim is for this observation report to be comprehensive, while also facilitating the observer group's analysis in relation to the application of learning theories.

## **Discussion**

### **Analysis of Classroom Observations Using Learning Theories**

Before discussing the results of the analysis of the PAI Tauhid learning observation using a specific learning theory, it is necessary to outline a diagram of the general flow of the learning process. This diagram is intended to facilitate the analysis of the application of learning theories to each component of the observed learning process.

Furthermore, in analyzing the implementation of this learning process in accordance with a specific learning theory, the analysis will focus on core activities. The analysis will not be merely descriptive and narrative but will be illustrated with diagrams and photographs taken during the observation. The purpose is not only to facilitate the identification of relevant learning theories but also to ensure that the analysis results provide a realistic picture of the observed PAI learning implementation.

The fact that a classroom learning process, which is limited to two 40-minute sessions, does not rely solely on a single learning theory is evident in the Islamic Education lessons observed by the observer group. In each stage of the core activities, learning activities can be categorized under different learning theories.

Here is a detailed analysis:

1. The teacher explains the material.

The teacher gives a verbal explanation to the students in front of the class. The following are images and diagrams illustrating this learning process:



Figure 1

The figure 1 shows a classroom setting for Islamic Education (PAI) lessons on Tawhid, the Beautiful Names of Allah (Asmaul Husna), and the Pillars of Faith. The lesson uses flashcards on Tawhid, the Beautiful Names of Allah, and the Pillars of Faith as teaching aids.

At this stage, it is evident that the teacher is applying the theory of mental discipline in their teaching. This is evident when the teacher explains the material already contained in the textbook that the students have. Essentially, students can gain an understanding by reading the material on Islamic Education (PAI) regarding Tawhid, the Beautiful Names of Allah (Asmaul Husna), and the Pillars of Faith (Rukun Iman) found in the module. However, the teacher's explanation is intended to help students who have not yet understood or grasped the concepts to do so. Additionally, students who already understand the material will gain a clearer grasp of the concepts being taught.

Indeed, there is no guarantee that students have previously read the material, and during the lesson, students are not required to read it beforehand. Therefore, the teacher's explanations are delivered systematically and in detail, in accordance with the expository teaching model, where the learning activity is teacher-centered. The teacher actively provides detailed explanations or information about the instructional material. This aligns with the theory of mental discipline. Students are expected to master the learning material based on the teacher's detailed explanations.

The principle of repeating the presentation of material is intended to reinforce students' knowledge and understanding of the material being studied, and this aligns very well with the theory of mental discipline.

## 2. Group Exercises.

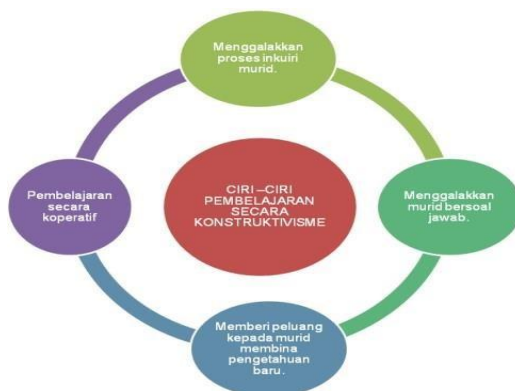
The next step is to assign group exercises. After the teacher provides an oral explanation followed by a brief question-and-answer session, students are asked to complete three practice questions. The practice questions reflect the entirety of the teacher's explanation of the material regarding PAI lessons on Tawhid, Asmaul Husna, and the pillars of faith. It can be said that at this stage, the principle of material review takes place. The difference is that, whereas previously the material was covered through the teacher's verbal explanation, at this stage students delve deeper into the material by working on practice questions in groups.



Figure 2. Shows a learning activity on the Asmaul Husna

When answering practice questions, students are not limited to providing answers that match the teacher's explanations; they are allowed to provide examples of the role of students in learning PAI (Islamic Education) on Tawhid, Asmaul Husna, and the pillars of faith based on the textbook, as well as on their own knowledge and experience (figure 2). This means that at this stage, in addition to the application of the theory of mental discipline, constructivist learning theory has also been applied in the ongoing learning process.

At this stage, the theories of mental discipline and constructivist learning are applied. The following chart illustrates the position of each:



The observed learning process for Islamic Education (TAUHID) aligns with Jean Piaget's constructivist learning theory. Piaget argued that learning is driven by the individual's initiative, meaning that knowledge originates from the individual. Students interact with their social environment, specifically their peers rather than older individuals. The primary determinant of learning is the individual in question (the student), while the social environment serves as a secondary factor. Student engagement is the primary determinant and guarantee of learning success, whereas the arrangement of conditions merely facilitates learning.

According to Piaget, the learning process involved in the development of cognition consists of three stages, namely:

- a. Assimilation, which is the integration of new information into existing cognitive structures.
- b. Accommodation is the process of adapting structures to new situations.
- c. Equilibration is the continuous adjustment between assimilation and accommodation.

### 3. Presentation and Discussion.

The presentation takes place after the students have completed the group practice problems within the time allotted by the teacher.

After a group gave its presentation, a discussion followed. During the discussion, students in the audience were allowed to ask questions of the presenting group. Of all the groups in the class, three took turns presenting their answers. The discussion process went well; the audience provided feedback through both questions and opinions. At this stage, the theory of mental discipline was applied, as the students' cognitive structures were 'reinforced' by the principle of material repetition through the presentations and discussions conducted.

### 4. Joint Evaluation and Conclusions.

In this context, evaluation refers to the teacher's assessment of the learning process that has taken place. It does not refer to the grading of students' written assignments, as such grading is conducted at a different time and is part of the teacher's responsibilities outside of class hours. Evaluation includes assessing students' performance and engagement during the learning process. The assessment of performance and engagement includes evaluating the level of attention students demonstrate when listening to the teacher's explanations, when the teacher asks questions, when students work in groups, and during presentations and discussions. The teacher demonstrates this assessment through verbal praise during the learning process. The teacher also assesses student participation in writing by recording names—specifically, those who ask questions, answer, and present the group's response.

Joint conclusion-drawing is conducted as follows: the teacher, together with the students, provides an oral review containing a summary or the essence of the material that has been studied.

Through this joint conclusion-drawing process, it can be concluded that the learning session has achieved the expected learning objectives.

Overall, based on the results of the analysis of the application of learning theories through observations conducted at the Daarul Mansur Wanayasa Islamic Boarding School for Islamic Education (PAI), the teaching has applied a combination of mental discipline learning theory and constructivist learning theory. It turns out that in a single PAI class session, the application of learning theories does not involve just one theory, but can involve more than one. Teacher creativity and instructional innovation are crucial components of the classroom learning process, ensuring that learning achieves its intended goals. The lessons taught by the teacher were evaluated as dynamic and engaging; simultaneously, time management and mastery of the material were effectively achieved.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Studying learning theories is most effective when supplemented by classroom observation. Observation activities greatly help students recognize, identify, and analyze the application of learning theories. Specifically, the observer group conducted observations of Islamic Education (PAI) instruction at the junior high school level.

The PAI lesson observed was the subject of Tawhid. The observation was conducted at . The observation technique used by the observer group was surface observation, with minimal involvement to avoid influencing the direction of the learning process, which was based on a specific learning theory.

Analysis of the observation results to identify the implementation of instruction relevant to specific learning theories was conducted by analyzing each stage of the learning process during core activities. Based on these analysis results, it was found that the observed PAI instruction on Tauhid, Asmaul Husna, and the pillars of faith represents a combination of the application of mental discipline learning theory and constructivist learning theory.

#### *ACKNOWLEDGMENT*

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