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The 21st Century Transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning Through Active Deep Learner Experience (ADLX): Teachers' Strategies, Students' Responses, And Challenges in Elementary School

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Abstract:

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in elementary schools is often still traditional, teacher-centered, and focused on memorization, which makes it less meaningful for students. Ideally, PAI learning should foster active, reflective, and applicable processes in daily life. This study aims to describe the implementation of the *Active Deep Learner Experience* (ADLX) method in PAI learning at SDIT Bina Insani, Kediri City, focusing on teachers' strategies, students' responses, and challenges faced during its implementation. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings revealed that teachers applied structured strategies aligned with ADLX principles, involving students actively and reflectively in the learning process. Students responded positively, as shown by increased participation, deeper conceptual understanding, value internalization, and improved worship practices. However, teachers faced challenges such as limited instructional time, diverse student characteristics, and restricted learning media. The study concludes that ADLX is effective in improving the quality of PAI learning across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. These findings imply the need for institutional support in terms of resource provision, flexible policies, and continuous teacher training to ensure the sustainable implementation of ADLX.

Keywords: ADLX, Islamic Religious Education, Active Learning, Deep Learning, Elementary School

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Introduction

Education in the 21st century faces significant challenges, particularly in preparing students to adapt to rapid developments. Beyond academic abilities, students are also required to possess critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills. In this context, religious education in elementary schools plays an important role, as it not only transfers knowledge but also shapes students' religious character and morality (Fauzi and Fikri 2021).

However, the practice of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in many elementary schools still encounters fundamental problems. Generally, the learning model applied tends to be traditional, teacher-centered, and memorization-oriented. This condition results in students being less actively involved in the learning process, making learning often perceived as monotonous and merely an academic obligation (Nugraha, Sulastri, and Rahmat 2022).

Ideally, PAI learning should provide meaningful, contextual, and applicable learning experiences in daily life. Within the framework of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, PAI is expected to foster more active student participation, internalize Islamic values, and connect them with real-life social and cultural challenges (Kemendikbudristek 2022). However, the reality in the field shows a considerable gap between ideals and practice.

Several scholars argue that the paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning is an essential step in improving the quality of education. One effective approach is active learning, which emphasizes students' full engagement. Research by (Sari and Mustaqim 2020) demonstrated that active learning increases students' motivation, interaction, and learning outcomes. Moreover, the deep learning approach has also gained attention, as it encourages students not only to memorize information but also to understand concepts deeply and reflectively (Wibowo and Wahyudi 2021).

The integration of these two approaches has given rise to the concept of Active Deep Learner Experience (ADLX). This approach enables students to learn actively and deeply by emphasizing real experiences, reflection, and application in daily life. This aligns with experiential learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is gained through the process of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Kolb 2015).

Previous studies have shown the effectiveness of experience-based learning. For example, (Kurniawati, Rahman, and Anwar 2021) found that experiential learning improved students' understanding of religious values. (Santoso and Lestari 2023) also confirmed that the deep learning approach could develop critical thinking skills in elementary school students. However, research that specifically addresses the integration of active learning and deep learning within the ADLX framework in PAI learning remains scarce.

This research gap highlights the need for a more in-depth study of ADLX implementation in PAI learning. When properly applied, ADLX can address learning needs not only cognitively but also affectively and psychomotorically. (Yusuf 2020) emphasized that practical religious learning is more effectively embedded in students compared to theoretical approaches alone. Therefore, ADLX holds great potential as an innovative solution for PAI learning in elementary schools.

Furthermore, the urgency of this research becomes more evident when linked to the demands of 21st-century competencies. Through ADLX, PAI learning not only supports the development of religiosity but also equips students with higher-order thinking skills, communication, and collaboration. Teachers are also required to act as

facilitators who design active, reflective, and meaningful learning (Hidayat and Putri 2022).

Although previous studies have revealed the advantages of active and deep learning separately, little literature explicitly discusses how ADLX is implemented in PAI subjects, particularly at Islamic-based elementary schools such as SDIT. In fact, the characteristics of these institutions demand integration between academic and spiritual values. Thus, this study makes a significant academic contribution by enriching the literature on experience-based learning in Islamic religious education.

Practically, this research is also valuable for PAI teachers in elementary schools. The findings are expected to provide a concrete picture of teachers' strategies in implementing ADLX, how students respond to the learning experiences provided, and what challenges are faced. In this way, teachers can gain inspiration to design more creative, contextual, and character-oriented Islamic learning.

Moreover, the findings of this study can support educational policies aligned with the direction of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. If proven effective, ADLX can be recommended as one of the innovative learning models to be more widely adopted in elementary schools, particularly in religious education contexts. This would strengthen the role of PAI as a medium for developing religious character as well as 21st-century skills.

Based on this rationale, this research focuses on describing the implementation of the Active Deep Learner Experience (ADLX) method in Islamic Religious Education at SDIT Bina Insani, Kediri City. The objectives of this study are: (1) to reveal teachers' strategies in applying ADLX, (2) to explore students' responses to the learning experiences provided, and (3) to identify the challenges faced by teachers in implementing ADLX. With these objectives, this study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of PAI learning in elementary schools.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, aiming to provide an in-depth depiction of the implementation of the Active Deep Learner Experience (ADLX) method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SDIT Bina Insani, Kediri City. The research focused on teachers' strategies in designing and conducting instruction, students' responses to the learning experiences provided, as well as the challenges encountered during the implementation process. The research subjects included PAI teachers and fifth-grade students, selected through purposive sampling based on data needs. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to obtain a comprehensive picture of ADLX implementation. This approach was chosen because it allows the exploration of meanings, perceptions, and students' learning experiences in a more natural classroom context (Creswell and Poth 2018).

The data collected were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, thereby increasing the credibility of the research findings. By employing this method, the researcher was able to understand the ADLX learning process holistically and to identify patterns relevant to the research objectives. Accordingly, the qualitative descriptive approach was considered the most appropriate to answer the research questions while providing both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of experience-based PAI learning models in elementary schools.

Results and Discussion

The teacher's Strategies in Implementing ADLX

The findings revealed that PAI teachers at SDIT Bina Insani, Kediri City, applied structured strategies in implementing the Active Deep Learner Experience (ADLX). Teachers prepared instructional tools such as syllabi, lesson plans, and modules that integrated ADLX stages: opening with a trigger (opener), material review, concept exploration, formulation, and application of values in real-life situations. The use of energizers in the form of educational games was also employed to maintain students' focus and motivation.

This strategy demonstrates a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Teachers acted as facilitators guiding students to experience, reflect, and connect the material with real-life contexts. This is consistent with the research of (Sari and Mustaqim 2020) which emphasized the effectiveness of active learning in improving student participation, and the view of (Wibowo and Wahyudi 2021) that deep learning supports deeper conceptual understanding.

Compared with previous studies, the teachers' strategies in this research showed uniqueness. (Kurniawati et al. 2021) focused on experiential learning, while (Santoso and Lestari 2023) emphasized deep learning. This study, however, combined both within the ADLX framework. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in presenting strategies that comprehensively integrate active and deep learning experiences in the context of PAI.

Students' Responses to the Implementation of ADLX

Students' responses to the implementation of ADLX were very positive. Observations showed that students were more active in asking questions, engaging in discussions, and connecting PAI materials with real-life situations. Experience-based activities such as worship simulations, educational games, and reflections made learning enjoyable and meaningful.

From the cognitive aspect, students demonstrated a deep understanding of religious material. They did not merely memorize verses or hadiths but were able to explain their meanings and the relevance of Islamic values in everyday life. This reinforces the findings of (Santoso and Lestari 2023), which highlighted that deep learning effectively develops critical thinking skills.

From the affective aspect, students experienced value internalization through reflective activities. They became more motivated to perform worship correctly and realized the importance of Islamic character. These results align with, who emphasized that practical religious learning is more effectively embedded in students compared to purely theoretical approaches.

In the psychomotor aspect, students showed improved skills in worship practices such as ablution and prayer. Direct activities allowed them to practice the material correctly. This finding is consistent with (Kurniawati et al. 2021), who stated that experiential learning supports students' religious practice skills.

These findings strengthen the literature suggesting that ADLX not only enhances academic understanding but also plays a crucial role in shaping religious attitudes and practical skills. Unlike the study of (Lailie and Dewi 2022), which focused on academic learning outcomes, this research emphasizes that ADLX also significantly contributes to the development of students' Islamic character. This constitutes one of the novelties of this study.

Teachers' Challenges and Constraints

Despite the positive impacts of ADLX, teachers faced several obstacles. One of them was limited instructional time. The relatively long structure of ADLX stages was difficult to accommodate within the allocated lesson hours, requiring teachers to manage time carefully so that all stages could be implemented properly.

Another challenge was the diversity of student characteristics. Some students adapted easily to active methods, while others remained passive and required intensive guidance. This is consistent with (Nugraha et al. 2022), who noted that active methods face challenges in accommodating diverse student characteristics.

Teachers also faced limitations in media and learning resources. Although the school provided basic facilities, the variety of media for learning exploration was still lacking. Additionally, administrative burdens in preparing instructional tools often consumed time that could otherwise be devoted to developing creativity. These findings are in line with (Damai, Minsih, and & Fuadi 2023), who emphasized the importance of institutional support and resources in ADLX implementation.

These challenges indicate that the success of ADLX implementation is not solely determined by teachers' competence but also requires school support. Such support includes providing varied learning media, offering teacher training, and ensuring flexible policies to allow ADLX to be consistently implemented.

Analysis

The implementation of the Active Deep Learner Experience (ADLX) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SDIT Bina Insani demonstrated a significant transformation from traditional learning patterns to active and reflective approaches. Teachers' structured strategies, emphasizing stages of experience, reflection, and the application of Islamic values in everyday life, reflect a paradigm shift in education. Teachers no longer function merely as information transmitters but rather as facilitators guiding students to discover meaning in each learning process. This is consistent with (Biggs and Tang 2011) view on *constructive alignment*, namely the interconnectedness of objectives, activities, and assessments in learning.

Students' positive responses serve as strong indicators of ADLX's success. They actively engaged in asking questions, discussing, and practicing the material learned. This participation shows that experience-based learning fosters a sense of ownership in students toward the knowledge they acquire. This condition reinforces the findings of (Sari and Mustaqim 2020), who asserted that active involvement increases intrinsic motivation and learning achievement. Therefore, PAI learning through ADLX not only improves cognitive outcomes but also builds students' emotional attachment to the religious values being taught.

From the cognitive perspective, ADLX encouraged students not merely to memorize verses or hadiths but to interpret their meanings and relevance. This process helped them develop higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Within the context of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, such skills are among the key 21st-century competencies that must be instilled from an early age. These findings are consistent with (Santoso and Lestari 2023), who showed that deep learning effectively fosters critical thinking skills in elementary school students.

In the affective domain, the application of ADLX proved effective in reinforcing the internalization of Islamic values. Reflective activities conducted after learning

experiences enabled students to become more aware of the importance of morals in everyday life. (Yusuf 2020) emphasized that practical religious learning is more easily internalized by students. Thus, ADLX helps to overcome the weaknesses of traditional methods that place too much emphasis on memorization while neglecting value appreciation.

Meanwhile, in the psychomotor domain, ADLX provided students with broad opportunities to practice lessons such as ablution, prayer, and other worship activities.

Through direct practice, students not only understood theory but also became skilled in its application. This supports the findings of (Kurniawati et al. 2021), who highlighted the significant role of experiential learning in developing students' practical skills. Accordingly, ADLX provides a balance between cognitive mastery, affective internalization, and psychomotor skills in PAI learning.

Nevertheless, ADLX implementation was not without challenges. Teachers faced time constraints because the relatively lengthy ADLX stages were difficult to accommodate within limited lesson hours. Moreover, the diversity of student characteristics also posed a challenge, as not all students could immediately adapt to active learning patterns. (Nugraha et al. 2022) emphasized that teachers need to apply differentiated strategies to accommodate the variety of student characteristics. Thus, teachers' flexibility in classroom management becomes a key factor for success.

The lack of learning media was another obstacle. Although schools provided basic facilities, the limited variety of media hindered optimal exploration of contextual materials. This impacted the effectiveness of meaningful learning. (Damai et al. 2023) stressed that institutional support in the form of media provision and facilities is essential for successful ADLX implementation. Therefore, the success of ADLX depends not only on teachers but also on systemic support from schools and policymakers.

Theoretically, this study reinforces (Kolb 2015) experiential learning theory, which posits that knowledge is more meaningful when gained through experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. However, this study provides novelty by showing that the integration of active learning and deep learning within the ADLX framework produces more comprehensive outcomes in PAI learning. This novelty confirms that ADLX is not only relevant to general subjects but is also highly effective for religious subjects at the elementary level.

From a practical standpoint, the results of this study provide PAI teachers with concrete illustrations of how to design creative, contextual, and reflective learning. Teachers can replicate strategies used, such as the application of openers or triggers, educational games, and reflective activities at the end of lessons. These practices demonstrate that pedagogical innovation does not always require advanced technology but can be realized through simple yet meaningful activity designs.

Finally, this study has important policy implications. To ensure the sustainability of ADLX, schools need to provide continuous teacher training, supportive facilities, and flexible time management. This aligns with the direction of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which promotes active, contextual, and character-oriented learning. With adequate institutional support, ADLX has the potential to become one of the leading learning models that can be more widely adopted in PAI learning at elementary schools.

Synthesis and Novelty Analysis

In general, this study reinforces the literature on the effectiveness of active, deep, and experience-based learning. However, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on the implementation of ADLX in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Islamic-based elementary schools, which has rarely been examined. For instance, the study by (Lailie and Dewi 2022) only highlighted the impact of ADLX on learning outcomes, whereas this research explored teachers' strategies, students' responses, and the challenges of implementation.

From a theoretical perspective, this research confirms (Kolb 2015) experiential learning theory, which states that direct experiences strengthen students' understanding and memory retention. Nevertheless, the new contribution of this study is the integration

of active learning and deep learning within ADLX, which was practically applied to PAI learning. This approach makes learning meaningful not only cognitively but also affectively and psychomotorically.

Therefore, this research contributes academically by enriching the literature on ADLX in Islamic religious education, while also offering practical contributions for teachers to design more contextual and reflective learning. Furthermore, this study has policy implications for schools to provide greater support for ADLX implementation through resource provision, time management, and teacher training. These findings affirm the position of this study as research that presents both novelty and relevance in the practice of Islamic elementary education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the research on the implementation of the Active Deep Learner Experience (ADLX) in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SDIT Bina Insani, Kediri City, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, teachers' strategies in implementing ADLX were demonstrated through structured planning, ranging from the preparation of instructional tools to the implementation of experience-based learning stages. Teachers acted as facilitators who guided students to engage actively, deeply, and reflectively in the learning process.

Second, students' responses to the implementation of ADLX were highly positive. They became more enthusiastic, actively engaged in discussions, and were able to connect PAI materials with daily life. Cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects developed in a balanced manner, making learning not only oriented toward memorization but also toward character formation and practical skills.

Third, teachers encountered several challenges in implementing ADLX, including limited instructional time, diverse student characteristics, and insufficient learning media. These obstacles indicate the need for institutional support, such as resource provision, flexible time management, and teacher training.

Thus, the implementation of ADLX has proven effective in enhancing the quality of PAI learning in elementary schools, although it requires ongoing support to address the challenges encountered.

Research Implications

Theoretical Implications

This study reinforces the literature on the effectiveness of ADLX as an integration of active learning and deep learning. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in its application within the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools, which has rarely been studied. The findings show that ADLX not only improves cognitive learning outcomes but also supports students' affective and psychomotor development.

Practical Implications

For PAI teachers, this research provides examples of more creative, reflective, and contextual experience-based learning strategies. Teachers can utilize ADLX to create classroom environments that are enjoyable, interactive, and meaningful. Furthermore, teachers need to manage time effectively and adapt methods to accommodate students' diverse characteristics.

Policy Implications

For schools and education policymakers, this research emphasizes the necessity of institutional support for the successful implementation of ADLX. Such support may include the provision of varied learning resources, flexible time management policies, and continuous teacher training. These steps align with the direction of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, which emphasizes active, contextual, and character-oriented learning.

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