

Active Learning as A Teaching Method: A Discourse for Its Implementation in Islamic Education

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Abstract: There are many critiques toward our Islamic education, among them is about incapacity either in developing or braveness to create innovation teaching methods in classroom. It's caused by our attitude that tends to reduce function of education as a just learning activity. In this context, this paper tries to present a discourse on how we should do penetration in learning process of our classroom. Along with emergence of paradigm alteration of educational system in university from TCL (Teacher Center Learning) to SCL (Student Center Learning) models, so a Active learning method is become a relevant and significance strategy to be implemented in our classroom. The implementation of the Active learning method in Islamic education system will bring into reality our expectation in order to students become moralized persons who own reason wits and heart sharpness in actualizing Islamic values. Because, the Active learning method able to build and develop students character and personality, including to guide their attention toward real problem and requirement. In addition, this method stimulates students to getting critical thinking and problem solving skills; that needed in creating muslim succes in their daily life with society.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Learning, Method, Avtive Learning.

Introduction

Komaruddin Hidayat (2002), when he occupied an office as a Director of the *Pembinaan Perguruan Tinggi Islam* of DEPAG RI, paid close attention to our education world today that it is touched adversely by a serious crisis. Hidayat said that this crisis was being caused not only by the government budgeting lower than it's the vital need for our education world, but also it was being caused by the expert's weakness and invisibility in their vision and politics of national education. Many critics condemn that such educational concept was being reduced to become just teaching, even nothing other than action in class. Hidayat was apprehensive about our habit, which has only been doing a teaching than an educating or learning process up till now. Whereas, a teaching process that emphasizes on just cognitive aspect and technical skills is going to create a

skilled labourer man and not a leader who has a highest innovations and social commitments.

Exactly, according to me, Komaruddin Hidayat's point of view above is right. Therefore, we mustn't be trapped in educational and teaching process that produces scholars who have a skilled labourer man mentality and employees who poor in their imagination and character. It is not otherwise a new penetration in education and teaching sector; so, our nation will be put at edge among strengthening of foreign expansions and globalization of information, economic, and science. In the contemporary literatures, we can find a substitution "student" word for "learner" word.

In this context, student becomes a central focus and main actor in learning process, not teacher nor lecturer. This learning process is a new paradigm in the education discourse. Of course, the new paradigm is more humanize than the old paradigm, which put student as just object, as if

money box or savings, to collecting and learning by heart lessons from teacher or lecturer. Teacher, in the old, is a central focus and main actor, as active person. Meanwhile, student is a passive person and, as if he is a mechanical robot or unimaginative person. Therefore, many college teachers today want to move past passive learning to active learning, to find better ways of engaging students in the learning process.

Let us to do as they are doing to reform their teaching method, that is, a substitution “passive learning” for “active learning, then, teachers and lecturers at Islamic college or Islamic education should do something about the active learning method in their teaching. Thus, the new Islamic education will be more humanize and innovate than the past, as Islamic teachings desired and stressed normatively on the Moslem.

Materials and Methods

This study uses a literature review using data sources from journals, books, and proceedings related to the research. The result obtained from these references, the researchers read carefully to explain the various learning strategies that can be implemented in universities. An in-depth analysis confirmed that various learning strategies play an essential role in developing student understanding.

Results and Discussion

About Active Learning

Active learning, according to Mel Silberman (2002), is a totality of source of learning strategy collection comprehensively. Active learning is also defined as a learning process that stimulates student to learn actively (Zaini, *et al.*: 2002). In this learning, student should dominate learning activity. They must also invited to participate into all learning process not only mentally but also physically. By this manner, student will feel a more enjoyable situation until results of learning can be maximized.

Active Learning is also one of strategies to bind new information. After that, this new information will be saved into student brain. Therefore, it is

needed to special sets of equipment to bind it in order to the information will not forgot as soon as impossible. Because one of factors that causes forgetting information quickly is weakness of the human brain itself. Consequently, learning activities that rely on only seen of hearing have several weaknesses, but actually the results of learning should be saved up to long time. Relation to give foundation of the active learning that reduces these weaknesses, Mel Silberman (2002), here, modified and elaborated Confucius' philosophical thinking, that is:

What I **hear**, I forget

What I hear and **see**, I remember a little

What I hear, see, and **ask questions about or discuss** with someone else, I begin to understand

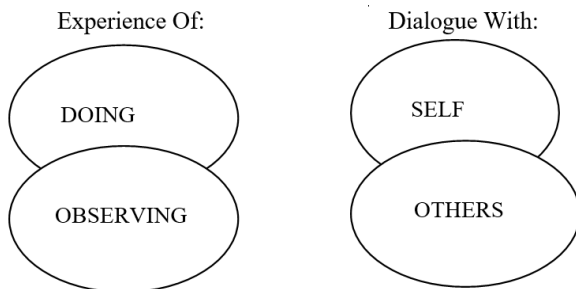
What I hear, see, discuss, and **do**, I acquire knowledge and skill

What I **teach** to another, I **master**.

Silberman also stated that “You can tell students what they need to know **very fast**. But they will forget what you tell them even faster”. So, we need to reform our teaching method with innovative and constructive methods, among them is, active learning. Because, active learning includes some strategies for becoming students are stimulated to active since beginning by means of many activities, which built a team working and then, they will think about lesson. The learning includes also leadership techniques in learning for either all class or small group and stimulation to discussion and debating, practice of skills, motivation to sending questions, and, even, creating mutual teaching situation among students. Actually, yes, but many teachers feel a need for help in imagining what to do, in or out of class that would constitute a meaningful set of learning activities.

In the model below L. Dee Fink (1999), an expert from University of Oklahoma Instructional Development Program, offer a way of conceptualizing the learning process in a way that may assist teachers in identifying meaningful forms of active learning.

A Model of Active Learning



This model suggests, as Fink explained, that all learning activities involve some kind of experience or some kind of dialogue. The two main kinds of dialogue are "Dialogue with Self" and "Dialogue with Others." The two main kinds of experience are "Observing" and "Doing."

Dialogue with Self: this is what happens when a learner thinks reflectively about a topic, i.e., they ask themselves what they think or should think what they feel about the topic, etc. This is "thinking about my own thinking," but it addresses a broader array of questions than just cognitive concerns. A teacher can ask students, on a small scale, to keep a journal for a course, or, on a larger scale, to develop a learning portfolio. In either case, students could write about *what* they are learning, *how* they are learning, what role this knowledge or learning plays in their own life, how this makes them *feel*, etc.

Dialogue with Others: this can and does come in many forms. In traditional teaching, when students read a textbook or listen to a lecture, they are "listening to" another person (teacher, book author). This can perhaps be viewed as "partial dialogue" but it is limited because there is no back-and-forth exchange. A much more dynamic and active form of dialogue occurs when a teacher creates an intense small group discussion on a topic. Sometimes teachers can also find creative ways to involve students in dialogue situations with people other than students (e.g., practitioners, and experts), either in class or outside of class. Whoever the dialogue is with, it might be done live, in writing, or by email.

Observing: this occurs whenever a learner watches or listens to someone else "Doing" something that is related to what they are learning

about. This might be such things as observing one's teacher do something (e.g., "This is how I critique a novel."), listening to other professionals perform (e.g., musicians), or observing the phenomena being studied (natural, social, or cultural). The act of observing may be "direct" or "vicarious." A direct observation means the learner is observing the real action, directly; a vicarious observation is observing a simulation of the real action. For example, a direct observation of poverty might be for the learner to actually go to where low income people are living and working, and spend some time observing life there. A vicarious or indirect observation of the same topic might be to watch a movie involving poor people or to read stories written by or about them.

Doing: this refers to any learning activity where the learner actually does something. For example, design a reservoir dam (engineering), conduct a high school band (music education), design and/or conduct an experiment (natural and social sciences), critique an argument or piece of writing (the humanities), investigate local historical resources (history), make an oral presentation (communication), and others.

Again, "Doing" may be direct or vicarious. Case studies, role-playing and simulation activities offer ways of vicariously engaging students in the "Doing" process. To take one example mentioned above, if one is trying to learn how to conduct a high school band, direct "Doing" would be to actually go to a high school and direct the students there. A vicarious "Doing" for the same purpose would be to simulate this by having the student conduct a band composed of fellow college students who were acting like (i.e., role playing) high school students. Or, in business courses, doing case studies is, in essence, a simulation of the decision making process that many courses are aimed at teaching.

Active Learning: Some Discourses of Its Implementation into Islamic Education

To achieve purpose of the active learning in Islamic education we must consistence to implement its procedures and strategies. It is important to recognize Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison' statement (1991) that research consistently has

shown that traditional lecture methods, in which lecturer's talk and students listen, dominate college and university classrooms. Beside that, it is important too to know the nature of active learning, the empirical research on its use, the common obstacles and barriers that give rise to faculty members' resistance to interactive instructional techniques, and how faculty, faculty developers, administrators, and educational researchers can make real the promise of active learning. Surprisingly, educators' use of the term "active learning" has been relying more on intuitive understanding than a common definition. Consequently, many faculties assert that all learning is inherently active and that students are therefore actively involved while listening to formal presentations in the classroom.

However, Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson (Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison' statement, 1991) suggests that students must do more than just listen: They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. Most important, to be actively involved, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Within this context, it is proposed that strategies promoting active learning be defined as instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing.

Use of these techniques in the classroom is vital because of their powerful impact upon students' learning. For example, several studies have shown that students prefer strategies promoting active learning to traditional lectures. Other research studies evaluating students' achievement have demonstrated that many strategies promoting active learning are comparable to lectures in promoting the mastery of content but superior to lectures in promoting the development of students' skills in thinking and writing. Further, some cognitive research has shown that a significant number of individuals have learning styles best served by pedagogical techniques other than lecturing. Therefore, a thoughtful and scholarly approach to skilful teaching requires that faculty become knowledgeable about the many ways strategies promoting active learning have been successfully used across the disciplines. Further,

each faculty member should engage in self-reflection, exploring his or her personal willingness to experiment with alternative approaches to instruction.

So, implementing the active learning in our institution, Islamic education should recognize L. Dee Fink's model of active learning above. Within this context, Fink recommends the following three suggestions, each of which involves a more advanced use of active learning, as follows:

Firstly, expand the Kinds of Learning Experiences You Create. The most traditional teaching consists of little more than having students read a text and listen to a lecture, a very limited and limiting form of Dialogue with Others. Consider using more dynamic forms of Dialogue with Others and the other three modes of learning. For example:

- Create small groups of students and have them make a decision or answer a focused question periodically, for example, in subject matter "Methodology of Islamic Study" (*Metodologi Studi Islam*) we can divide them into several groups, like methodology of *Bayani* group, methodology of *Burhani*, and methodology of *Irfani*.
- Find ways for students to engage in authentic dialogue with people other than fellow classmates who know something about the subject (on the web, by email, or live, or touring study, or interviewing with experts, etc.),
- Have students keep a journal or build a "learning portfolio" about their own thoughts, learning, feelings, etc.,
- Find ways of helping students observe (directly or vicariously) the subject or action they are trying to learn, and/or
- Find ways to allow students to actually do (directly, or vicariously with case studies, simulation or role-play) that which they need to learn to do, for example about gender issues in Islamic world.

Secondly, take Advantage of the "Power of Interaction. Each of the four modes of learning has its own value, and just using more of them should add variety and thereby be more interesting for the learner. However, when properly connected, the

various learning activities can have an impact that is more than additive or cumulative; they can be interactive and thereby multiply the educational impact. For example, if students write their own thoughts on a topic (Dialogue with Self) *before* they engage in small group discussion (Dialogue with Others), the group discussion should be richer and more engaging. If they can do both of these and then observe the phenomena or action (Observation), the observation should be richer and again more engaging. Then, if this is followed by having the students engage in the action itself (Doing), they will have a better sense of what they need to do and what they need to learn during doing. Finally if, after Doing, the learners process this experience by writing about it (Dialogue with Self) and/or discussing it with others (Dialogue with others), this will add further insight. Such a sequence of learning activities will give the teacher and learners the advantage of the Power of Interaction. Alternatively, advocates of Problem-Based Learning would suggest that a teacher start with "Doing" by posing a real problem for students to work on, and then having students consult with each other (Dialogue with Others) on how best to proceed in order to find a solution to the problem, like dualism or dichotomy problems in Islamic education. The learners will likely use a variety of learning options, including Dialogue with Self and Observing.

Thirdly, create Dialectic between Experience and Dialogue One refinement of the Interaction Principle described above is simply to create dialectic between the two principle components of this Model of Active Learning: Experience and Dialogue. New experiences (whether of Doing or Observing) have the potential to give learners a new perspective on what is true (beliefs) and/or what is good (values) in the world. Dialogue (whether with Self or with others) has the potential to help learners construct the many possible meanings of experience and the insights that come from them. A teacher who can creatively set up a dialectic of learning activities in which students move back and forth between having rich new experiences and engaging in deep, meaningful dialogue, can maximize the likelihood that the

learners will experience significant and meaningful learning.

Then, how can active learning be incorporated in the classroom? The modification of traditional lectures, according to John G. Penner (Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison, 1991) is one way to incorporate active learning in the classroom. Research has demonstrated, for example, that if a faculty member allows students to consolidate their notes by pausing three times for two minutes each during a lecture, students will learn significantly more information. Two other simple yet effective ways to involve students during a lecture are to insert brief demonstrations or short, unguarded writing exercises followed by class discussion. Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison stated that certain alternatives to the lecture format further increase student level of engagement: (1) the feedback lecture, which consists of two mini-lectures separated by a small-group study session built around a study guide, and (2) the guided lecture, in which students listen to a 20- to 30-minute presentation without taking notes, followed by their writing for five minutes what they remember and spending the remainder of the class period in small groups clarifying and elaborating the material (1991).

Discussion in class, according to Wilbert J. McKeachie, Paul R. Pintrich, Yi-Guang Lin, and David A.F. Smith. (Bonwell and Eison: 1991), is one of the most common strategies promoting active learning with good reason. If the objectives of a course are to promote long-term retention of information, to motivate students toward further learning, to allow students to apply information in new settings, or to develop students' thinking skills, then discussion is preferable to lecture. Research has suggested, however, for Ronald Hyman and Joseph Lowman (Bonwell and Eison: 1991) that to achieve these goals faculty must be knowledgeable of alternative techniques and strategies for questioning and discussion and must create a supportive intellectual and emotional environment that encourages students to take risks. In my opinion, it is a best idea if we can select and implement active learning techniques that Melvin Silberman divided into three parts or steps, as were

explained in his book, *Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject* (1999), namely:

- (1) First step contents several ice-breaking and other opening activities that adjust to kind of class, among them: Team building (to help students in order to more adapter and habitual among them or to create a spirit of togetherness and mutual depending on), On-The-Spot assessment (to observe and to study students behavior, knowledge, and experience), and Immediate learning involvement (to create students' initial interest in main discuss).
- (2) Second step contents some learning techniques can be used in the middle of lesson. These techniques are designed either to avoid or to support any direction under lecturer instruction in order students to thinking, experiencing, and assembling. Among of these techniques are: Full-class learning (giving lecturer's directions to stimulate all class), Class discussion (dialoging and debating about main topics), Question prompting (students request clarification or explaining from teacher), Collaborative learning (any task will be did collaboratively in small group of students), Peer teaching (directions must be given by other student), Independent learning (learning activities are acted individually), Affective learning (activities that can help students to examine their feelings, values, and attitudes), and Skill development (to learn and to practice skills, either technically or non-technically), and
- (3) Third step contents the manners of resume or conclusion the class until students can reflect on what they have already learned and recognized how to implement it in the next time. Among of strategies are: Review (remembering and resumung about what students have already learned), Self-assessment (to evaluate any changing about students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes), Future planning (to determine about how students are going to their learning activities after the class), and Expression of final sentiments (to communicate students' thoughts, feelings, and attentions in the end of class).

Several additional strategies promoting active learning have been similarly shown to influence

favourably students' attitudes and achievement. Visual-based instruction, for example, can provide a helpful focal point for other interactive techniques. In-class writing across the disciplines is another productive way to involve students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing. Two popular instructional strategies based on problem-solving model include the case study method of instruction and Guided Design. Other active learning pedagogues' worthy of instructors' use includes cooperative learning, debates, drama, role-playing and simulation, and peer teaching. In short, the published literature on alternatives to traditional classroom presentations provides a rich menu of different approaches faculty can readily add to their repertoire of instructional skills.

To address adequately why most faculty have not embraced recent calls for educational reform, according to Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison that is necessary first to identify and understand common barriers to instructional change, including the powerful influence of educational tradition; faculty self-perceptions and self-definition of roles; the discomfort and anxiety that change creates; and the limited incentives for faculty to change. But certain specific obstacles are associated with the use of active learning including limited class time; a possible increase in preparation time; the potential difficulty of using active learning in large classes; and a lack of needed materials, equipment, or resources. Perhaps the single greatest barrier of all, however, is the fact that faculty members' efforts to employ active learning involve risk--the risks that students will not participate, use higher-order thinking, or learn sufficient content, that faculty members will feel a loss of control, lack necessary skills, or be criticized for teaching in unorthodox ways. Each obstacle or barrier and type of risk, however, can be successfully overcome through careful, thoughtful planning.

Therefore, to solute some of these barriers, Melvin (he is more popular called by "Mel") Silberman suggests several advises as followed:

1. Use only suitable techniques or adopt them to be surely adjusted with your needs!

2. Don't try to do active learning activities redundantly! But, try a new method not more than once in week.
3. When you will introduce any method toward students, you could this method as an alternative of your common technique that you do something, in your opinion, which it is probably going to giving advantages in trying.
4. Don't burden students with too many activities! Even, a fewer is sometime more benefit than many. Try just few to arouse a class situation!, and
5. Make your directions clearly! Show of or illustrate what you hope that students are going to do until not emerge confuses will probably shift them from the main goal of using of the techniques.

“Active”, beside *meaningful, integrative, value-based, and challenging*, is one of the key factors for effective Islamic teaching and learning or Islamic education. The vision of effective Islamic teaching and learning set forth here is based on a *dynamic*, rather than static, view of Islam and Islamic education. This view is rooted in the belief that the mission of Islam is to positively affect and transform the world, and that the purpose of Islamic education is to prepare young men and women who are capable of carrying out this mission—emotionally, morally, and intellectually. Effective Islamic teaching and learning must be *active*. Islamic studies should demand a great deal from both the teacher and students. The teacher must be actively and genuinely engaged in the teaching process—making plans, choices and curriculum adjustments as needed. The effective teacher of Islamic education must be prepared to continuously update his or her knowledge base, adjust goals and content to students' needs, take advantage of unfolding events and teachable moments, and to develop examples that relate directly to students. Moreover, learning must be *active* by emphasizing hands-on and minds-on activities that call for students to react to what they are learning and to use it in their lives in some meaningful way.

Islamic society is founded on the principles of *belief* and *righteous conduct*. This connection

between values and practice lies at the very heart of the Islamic way of life. To be a Muslim requires that one's faith be reflected in one's practice and daily moral conduct with other people. We have the beautiful teachings of the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic Sunnah, and we have many mosques, Islamic schools and organizations. Yet many Muslims today do not live in accord with the principles and values of their faith. What is amiss?

Islamic religious instruction, in the recent centuries, has been taught primarily as a body of *information*, rather than as a body of *experiences*. For many Muslim children today, Islam does not inspire, and seems meaningless and irrelevant to their personal lives and experiences. Other religious communities face these problems, as well. The Islamic values education curriculum called for here focuses on personality and character development of children, close attention to the real needs and concerns of students, and preparation of students with the critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed to function successfully as Muslims in society. If we hope to succeed in our goal to raise our children in Islamic way, Muslim educators and parents must develop a better understanding of *how* children grow and learn; we must understand the processes of moral development and the methods of effective teaching and learning. Our children will not become moral individuals simply because we want or tell them to do so. They will become moral individuals by cultivating their *minds* and *hearts*, and by having opportunities to actually *see* and *apply* Islamic values in practice.

Conclusions

The reform of instructional practice in higher education, including Islamic education, must begin with faculty members' efforts. An excellent first step is to select strategies promoting active learning that one can feel comfortable with. Such low-risk strategies are typically of short duration, structured and planned focused on subject matter that is neither too abstract nor too controversial, and familiar to both the faculty member and the students.

Faculty developers can help stimulate and support faculty members' efforts to change by highlighting the instructional importance of active learning in the newsletters and publications they distribute. Further, the use of active learning should become both the subject matter of faculty development workshops and the instructional method used to facilitate such programs. And it is important that faculty developers recognize the need to provide follow-up to, and support for, faculty members' efforts to change.

Academic administrators, such as a Rector of UIN/UIN and his Vice Rectors or a Director of STAIN and his Vice-Director, can help these initiatives by recognizing and rewarding excellent teaching in general and the adoption of instructional innovations in particular. According to Leslie Cochran (Bonwell and Eison: 1991), Comprehensive programs to demonstrate this type of administrative commitment should address institutional employment policies and practices, the allocation of adequate resources for instructional development, and the development of strategic administrative action plans.

Equally important is the need for more rigorous research to provide a scientific foundation to guide future practices in the classroom. Currently, most published articles on active learning have been descriptive accounts rather than empirical investigations, many are out of date, either chronologically or methodologically, and a large number of important conceptual issues have never been explored. New qualitative and quantitative research should examine strategies that enhance students' learning from presentations; explore the impact of previously overlooked, yet educationally significant, characteristics of students, such as gender, different learning styles, or stage of

intellectual development; and be disseminated in journals widely read by faculty.

In retrospect, it appears that previous classroom initiative and written materials about active learning have all too often been isolated and fragmented. The resulting pedagogical efforts have therefore lacked coherence, and the goal of interactive classrooms has remained unfulfilled. Agree with Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison's view, I am going to suppose that through the coordinated efforts of individual faculty, faculty developers, academic administrators, educational researchers, lecturers, and, even, students however, higher education in the coming decade have to make real the promise of active learning.

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