

Teacher Strategies for Creating Meaningful and Joyful Learning in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe teachers' strategies in realizing meaningful and joyful learning in elementary schools. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, this study involved two elementary school teachers in Bandung Regency. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that teachers designed learning by relating the material to students' real experiences, using a contextual approach, and utilizing technology-based media such as videos, games, and digital tools. The learning process was made enjoyable through singing, playing, and interactive discussions that encouraged active student participation. Despite obstacles such as time constraints and differences in student motivation, teachers were able to overcome them through creative lesson planning and efficient classroom management. The application of these strategies has been proven to increase students' enthusiasm, engagement, and understanding of the learning material. Overall, meaningful and enjoyable learning contributes significantly to improving the quality of learning and creating a positive learning experience in the classroom.

Keywords: *elementary school, joyful learning, meaningful learning, qualitative research, teacher strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

Basic education is an important foundation in shaping students' character, knowledge, and skills. At this level, the learning process is not only aimed at transferring knowledge, but also at fostering interest in learning, curiosity, and active student involvement in the learning process (Purwanti et al., 2023). However, in reality, many teachers still apply conventional learning methods, namely teacher-centered learning with monotonous lectures and assignments. This condition causes students to quickly become bored, passive, and less understanding of the meaning of the material being studied (Cahyani, 2020).

To overcome these problems, teachers need to create meaningful and Joyful Learning experiences. Meaningful learning occurs when students are able to relate new knowledge to their previous experiences or knowledge (Ramadhani et al., 2024). According to Ausubel's theory of meaningful learning, the learning process will be more effective if students understand the relationship between new concepts and existing cognitive structures (Nefi, 2023). Meanwhile, Joyful Learning creates a positive,

interactive classroom atmosphere that encourages students to participate actively without pressure. The combination of these two approaches is believed to increase learning motivation, creativity, and learning outcomes of students in elementary school (Ningrum & Panjali, 2024).

Teachers play a central role in realizing both types of learning. Through appropriate learning strategies such as the use of interactive media, contextual approaches, educational games, or collaborative activities, teachers can transform the learning atmosphere into a more lively and meaningful one for students (Nurhayati & , Langlang Handayani, 2020). However, in practice, not all teachers are able to design strategies that are appropriate to the characteristics of students and learning objectives (Chung, 2020). Therefore, it is important to examine how teachers implement meaningful and Joyful Learning strategies in elementary schools as an effort to improve the quality of learning.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, as it aims to describe in depth the strategies used by teachers in realizing meaningful and Joyful Learning in elementary schools (Waruwu, 2023).

2.1. Research Design

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research design. This design was chosen because the main objective of the study is to describe in depth the phenomenon of teacher strategies in creating meaningful and Joyful Learning based on real situations in the field (Santi, 2024).

2.2. Participants of the Study

The participants in this study consisted of two elementary school teachers, each teaching fourth and fifth grade at a public elementary school in Bandung (or a location deemed relevant by the researcher).

2.3. Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation. The observation guidelines were used to observe how teachers implemented meaningful and Joyful Learning in the classroom, including teaching strategies, use of media, and student participation (Sahara et al., 2025). The interview guidelines were designed to be semi-structured and aimed to explore teachers' strategies, obstacles, and reflections in creating meaningful and Joyful Learning, focusing on seven aspects, namely lesson planning, meaningful learning, Joyful Learning, use of learning media, obstacles encountered, impact on students, and teacher reflections. Meanwhile, documentation is used to collect supporting data such

as Lesson Plans (RPP), learning media, and photos of learning activities in the classroom. All instruments are validated through expert judgment to ensure the relevance and clarity of the questions.

2.4. Data Analysis Techniques

The data in this study were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which consists of three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Futri et al., 2024). In the data reduction stage, information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation was selected and simplified to focus on teachers' strategies in implementing meaningful and Joyful Learning. The data was then presented in descriptive form to identify patterns and relationships between findings, followed by drawing conclusions through repeated interpretation and verification to ensure data accuracy and consistency. To maintain data validity, this study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation by comparing information obtained from teachers and different data collection methods (Luthfiyani & Murhayati, 2024).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that teachers design meaningful and Joyful Learning through material analysis, discussions with colleagues, and the use of technology such as TikTok, AI, and various learning media (Sartimah, 2025). In preparing lesson plans, teachers adjust the level of difficulty of tasks based on student characteristics so that all students are facilitated without anyone being left behind (Rosmana et al., 2024). Learning is carried out by linking the material to the students' real experiences and providing opportunities for exploration through independent experiments, which elicit enthusiastic responses even though some students give up easily when they encounter difficulties (Levy & Mensah, 2021). Learning is made enjoyable through games, gadgets, songs, and ice breakers, while media such as projectors, computers, and touch screens have been proven to increase students' interest and understanding (Wana et al., 2024). The obstacles that arise include varying student motivation, time constraints, and dense material, but teachers overcome these with efficient activities. Overall, the strategies implemented had a positive impact on student activity, motivation, and learning attitudes, and teachers plan to continue developing them (Nur Aziza Basuki et al., 2024).

The findings of this study were generated from a systematic review of observational data from the learning process, teacher reflections, and documentation of learning tools, which were then selected and grouped into key themes of pedagogical practice. The analysis revealed that developing meaningful learning does not occur instantly, but rather through reflective stages involving review of teaching materials,

professional collaboration with colleagues, and the selection of contextual learning media appropriate to student characteristics. Adjusting the complexity of assignments in lesson plans reflects teachers' pedagogical awareness of the diversity of student abilities, which is analytically evident through the application of a gradual and adaptive assignment strategy.

Furthermore, linking learning materials to authentic student experiences and providing opportunities for exploration through independent experimentation reflect the application of experiential learning, as indicated by increased student participation and enthusiasm during learning activities. Variations in student responses, including some students' tendency to give up quickly, were identified as indicators of challenges in self-regulation skills in active learning. The use of digital technology, including audiovisual media and commonly used platforms, has been empirically proven to increase student attention and understanding, as reflected in the level of student engagement in classroom learning activities. Time constraints and dense material content were examined as structural factors in learning, which teachers then anticipated through the implementation of efficiency strategies and prioritizing activities. In general, the research results showed a positive relationship between the implementation of adaptive learning strategies and increased student motivation, activeness, and learning attitudes.

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the constructivist perspective, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through learning experiences and interactions with the environment (Piaget; Vygotsky). Teachers' efforts to connect learning materials to students' real-life contexts reflect the application of meaningful learning according to Ausubel, making learning more relevant and meaningful because it aligns with students' cognitive structures. The establishment of varying levels of task difficulty represents the application of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson), which is not merely a technical strategy but also an inclusive approach to ensuring equitable learning for all students.

The use of digital technology and creative media can be interpreted as the application of technology-enhanced learning that functions as cognitive tools, not merely as entertainment. The finding that some students tend to give up quickly suggests the importance of strengthening self-regulated learning and a growth mindset, common challenges in activity-based learning. Time constraints and material density highlight the pedagogical dilemma between curriculum demands and the need for deep learning. However, teachers' ability to flexibly adapt learning strategies reflects adaptive competencies aligned with the concept of reflective teaching. Thus, the findings of this study not only describe effective learning practices but also provide empirical evidence that meaningful learning requires a balance between pedagogical design, technology utilization, and sensitivity to student needs.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that the learning strategies implemented by teachers are able to create meaningful and Joyful Learning experiences for students. Teachers design lessons by considering the characteristics and ability levels of students, as well as utilising various sources and technological media to create varied learning activities. Implementing lessons that relate the material to real-life experiences and provide room for exploration has been proven to increase student motivation, activity, and understanding of the material. The use of games, gadgets, and creative activities also helped to create a positive and interactive classroom atmosphere. Although there were obstacles such as time constraints and differences in student motivation, teachers were able to overcome them by adjusting their strategies and streamlining activities. Overall, the strategies used were effective in improving the quality of the learning process and outcomes, and are worth continuing to develop as part of classroom learning innovation.

This research contributes theoretically by strengthening the understanding of meaningful learning through the integration of adaptive pedagogical design, technology utilization, and attention to learner characteristics. Practically, these findings provide a reference for teachers in designing contextual, flexible learning strategies that encourage active student engagement. Policy implications point to the need for systematic support for the development of teachers' pedagogical competence and technological literacy. Future research is recommended to involve more diverse contexts and educational levels, use a more robust methodological approach, and examine factors supporting the sustainability of meaningful learning implementation.

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