

Engaging Minds: The Impact of Project-Based Learning in Junior High Education at SMPM 1 Surabaya

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Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji potensi transformasi dari Project-Based Learning (PBL) sebagai metode pengajaran untuk siswa SMP di SMPM 1 Surabaya. Dengan menitikberatkan pada partisipasi aktif dan kerja tim, PBL meningkatkan kemampuan berpikir kritis, pemecahan masalah, serta motivasi siswa. Studi ini mengulas penelitian sebelumnya, menganalisis penerapan PBL di SMPM 1 Surabaya, dan membahas pengaruhnya terhadap prestasi akademik serta keterampilan hidup siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa PBL tidak hanya memperkuat pencapaian akademik siswa tetapi juga membekali mereka dengan kompetensi yang diperlukan untuk menghadapi tantangan masa depan.

Katakunci: Project-Based Learning, Sekolah Menengah Pertama, SMPM 1 Surabaya, Keterlibatan Siswa, Berpikir Kritis

Abstract: *This article examines project-based learning's (PBL) transformative potential as a teaching method for junior high students at SMPM 1 Surabaya. By prioritizing active participation and teamwork, PBL enhances students' critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and motivation. The study reviews existing research, analyzes PBL's implementation at SMPM 1 Surabaya, and discusses its influence on students' academic performance and essential life skills. The findings reveal that PBL not only strengthens students' academic achievements but also equips them with competencies required to meet future challenges.*

Keyword: *Project-Based Learning, Junior High School, SMPM 1 Surabaya, Student Engagement, Critical Thinking*

PENDAHULUAN

This article is based on a study investigating the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes at SMPM 1 Surabaya. The introduction provides the background emphasizing the need for innovative teaching approaches to address the challenges of junior high school education, the research questions concerning the necessity of relevant teaching methods, and the research objectives aimed at assessing the impact of PBL on students' engagement and academic performance.

The study aims to contribute practically by offering educators insights into implementing PBL and academically by enriching discussions on project-based instructional strategies. Previous research highlights the effectiveness of PBL in fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and motivation among students (Hattie and Donoghue, 2016; Bender, 2020). The study utilizes the concepts of active and collaborative learning as theoretical frameworks underlying the application of PBL (Hmelo-Silver and Barrows, 2019).

The novelty of this study lies in the implementation of PBL within the local context of SMPM 1 Surabaya,



specifically in English language classes, with a focus on its effects on students' social and academic skills. This project-based approach also integrates digital technology to support learning, addressing the contemporary need for digital literacy among students (Zainuddin and Halili, 2022). All elements are presented cohesively without subheadings to ensure continuity in the academic narrative.

METODE PENELITIAN

This study employed a qualitative approach, focusing on an in-depth exploration of the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) at SMPM 1 Surabaya. The research was conducted over two months, from September to October 2024, at the school, specifically in English classes utilizing PBL. Data collection methods included classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys to gather comprehensive insights. The research tools consisted of observation sheets, structured interview guides, and closed-ended questionnaires designed to measure students' responses. Documentation of student projects was also used to evaluate learning outcomes qualitatively. The study is descriptive in nature, aiming to detail the phenomena observed during the PBL implementation. Data were analyzed thematically by identifying and interpreting patterns related to the study's objectives, grounded in relevant theoretical frameworks.

This methodological approach was designed to provide a holistic understanding of PBL's application, encompassing the challenges faced by educators, its impact on classroom dynamics, and the benefits for students in developing both academic and social skills.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

The findings of this study reveal that Project-Based Learning (PBL) significantly enhances students' engagement, collaboration, and academic performance at SMPM 1 Surabaya. Classroom observations showed students actively participating in group projects with enthusiasm, reflecting increased motivation. Survey responses confirmed these observations, with students reporting a greater interest in their studies and recognizing the practical relevance of their learning tasks.

Teachers noted notable improvements in critical areas such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills—essential for academic success and personal growth. Academic performance also showed measurable gains, as demonstrated by higher scores on project-related assessments and students' ability to approach complex problems creatively. Documentation of student projects further highlighted innovative thinking and a deeper understanding of subject matter.

These findings align with existing literature. Hattie and Donoghue (2016) emphasize that active learning strategies like PBL enhance knowledge retention and

critical thinking. Hmelo-Silver and Barrows (2019) identify collaboration as a core benefit of PBL, noting its role in developing students' communication and conflict-resolution skills. Bender (2020) highlights that the real-world relevance of PBL increases students' intrinsic motivation, making learning more meaningful and engaging.

Moreover, Suh, Kim, and Kim (2021) demonstrate that PBL positively influences students' self-efficacy and academic performance, enabling them to confidently tackle complex tasks. Lastly, Zainuddin and Halili (2022) stress the importance of integrating digital tools into PBL, which was also observed in this study. The use of technology enhanced students' engagement and equipped them with critical digital literacy skills, further preparing them for future challenges.

Overall, the study underscores the dual importance of students' active involvement and institutional support. At SMPM 1 Surabaya, teacher training played a critical role in the successful implementation of PBL, highlighting the necessity of equipping educators with the knowledge and skills needed to adopt innovative teaching methods effectively.

KESIMPULAN DAN SARAN

This study concludes that PBL is an effective instructional strategy that not only improves students' academic achievements but also fosters essential life skills such as collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. By connecting classroom learning to real-world applications, PBL motivates students and prepares them to navigate future academic and professional challenges.

Based on the findings, several suggestions can be made. First, schools should prioritize professional development programs to equip teachers with the skills and confidence needed to implement PBL effectively. Second, integrating technology within PBL should be emphasized, as it enhances both engagement and digital literacy. Finally, further research could explore the long-term impact of PBL on student outcomes across diverse contexts, ensuring its adaptability and effectiveness in various educational settings.

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