

# The Implementation of Case Study through Field Observation Tasks to Enhance Students' Understanding of the Role of Mosques

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## Abstract

This study aimed to improve students' understanding of the roles and functions of mosques through the implementation of case-based learning combined with field observation tasks in the Islamic Religious Education course at Politeknik Negeri Banyuwangi. The study employed Classroom Action Research using two cycles, namely planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were 23 students. Data were collected through learning achievement tests, observation, documentation, and field observation assignment sheets, and were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative techniques. The findings showed that students' initial understanding of the roles and functions of mosques was still limited and tended to be theoretical. The mean pre-test score was 67.7. After the implementation of case-based learning through field observation tasks, the mean score increased to 77.2 in Cycle I and 83.3 in Cycle II. The learning process also became more active, contextual, and reflective, as students were able to connect conceptual knowledge with socio-religious realities in the community. These findings indicate that case-based learning through field observation tasks was effective in enhancing students' cognitive understanding, analytical ability, and learning engagement. Therefore, this instructional model is relevant for vocational higher education contexts that require the integration of theory and field experience.

*Keywords:* case-based learning; field observation; mosque roles and functions; learning outcomes.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman mahasiswa tentang peran dan fungsi masjid melalui implementasi pembelajaran berbasis kasus yang dikombinasikan dengan tugas observasi lapangan pada mata kuliah Pendidikan Agama Islam di Politeknik Negeri Banyuwangi. Penelitian ini menggunakan Riset Tindakan Kelas dengan dua siklus, yaitu perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Partisipan penelitian ini adalah 23 mahasiswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes pencapaian belajar, observasi, dokumentasi, dan lembar tugas observasi lapangan, dan dianalisis menggunakan teknik kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman awal mahasiswa tentang peran dan fungsi masjid masih terbatas dan cenderung teoritis. Rata-rata skor pre-test adalah 67,7. Setelah implementasi

pembelajaran berbasis kasus melalui tugas observasi lapangan, rata-rata skor meningkat menjadi 77,2 pada Siklus I dan 83,3 pada Siklus II. Proses pembelajaran juga menjadi lebih aktif, kontekstual, dan reflektif, karena mahasiswa mampu menghubungkan pengetahuan konseptual dengan realitas sosial-keagamaan di masyarakat. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis kasus melalui tugas observasi lapangan efektif dalam meningkatkan pemahaman kognitif, kemampuan analitis, dan keterlibatan belajar mahasiswa. Oleh karena itu, model pembelajaran ini relevan untuk konteks pendidikan tinggi vokasi yang membutuhkan integrasi teori dan pengalaman lapangan.

**Kata kunci:** pembelajaran berbasis kasus; observasi lapangan; peran dan fungsi masjid; hasil pembelajaran.

## Introduction

Learning on the roles and functions of mosques among university students is still frequently delivered in a conceptual manner and remains centered on lecturers' explanations. Consequently, students tend to perceive the mosque merely as a place of worship and have not yet fully understood it as an institution that also serves educational, social, *dakwah*, and community empowerment functions (Tamuri, 2021). In Islamic tradition, the mosque occupies a highly strategic position, as it functions not only as a place for the performance of *mahdhah* worship, but also as a center for education, community development, public service, and the advancement of socio-religious activities (Anwar et al., 2015).

This study was conducted at Politeknik Negeri Banyuwangi. Therefore, the learning context under investigation is situated within a vocational higher education environment, in which students require learning approaches that are contextual, practical, and closely connected to social realities in the community. To date, Islamic Religious Education (*PAI*) instruction at Poliwangi has continued to rely primarily on theoretical teaching materials delivered through lecture and discussion methods.

However, the context of higher education requires learning that not only emphasizes the mastery of theoretical concepts, but also encourages students to relate academic material to the social realities they encounter in society, including the actual roles and functions of mosques in the life of the Muslim community (Fedesco et al., 2020). The urgency of this study is further supported by the students' initial learning outcomes. Based on the research data, 23 students obtained an average *pre-test* score of 67.7, indicating that their initial understanding of the roles and functions of mosques was still insufficient and required improvement through a more contextual learning strategy.

This condition suggests that instruction relying solely on lectures is not fully adequate to help students develop a comprehensive understanding of the mosque's role, particularly when the subject matter requires a meaningful connection between Islamic concepts and actual practices within the community (Basthomi, 2020). As a result, students may have difficulty interpreting the mosque as a living social institution whose functions extend beyond ritual worship to include education, community development, and social services.

One relevant alternative for addressing this issue is the implementation of case-based learning through field observation assignments. Case-based learning provides students with opportunities to analyze real-life situations, identify existing problems, and construct understanding based on facts directly encountered in the field (Pilz et al., 2024). Field observation assignments further strengthen this process because students are not merely passive recipients of information, but are engaged in authentic learning experiences that enable them to directly observe how mosques perform their functions in worship, education, *dakwah*, youth development, and social service within the community (Vlachopoulos & Makri,

2024).

Previous studies have shown that learning based on real-world experiences and authentic assignments can improve student engagement, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and the depth of understanding of the subject matter being studied (Xiang et al., 2025). Moreover, studies on mosques have also emphasized that mosques possess significant potential as centers for educational development and student activities. Therefore, students' understanding of the roles and functions of mosques needs to be developed through approaches that are closely connected to empirical realities rather than limited to theoretical explanations in the classroom (Rahayu & Fakhruddin, 2024).

Another studies have shown that learning activities involving direct real-world experience can enhance the quality of student learning. Ahmad and Laha investigated the implementation of field study among Sociology students at IISIP Yapis Biak and found that learning activities that engage students directly in fieldwork help them understand social issues more concretely, strengthen their problem-analysis skills, and develop them into more creative, innovative, critical individuals who are capable of seeking solutions to the issues being examined (Ahmad & Laha, 2020). Meanwhile, from the perspective of instructional models, Fatimah, Sari, and Camara, through a systematic review of 10 articles on case-based learning, concluded that this approach has a positive impact on learning outcomes, critical thinking skills, and students' twenty-first-century competencies. These findings indicate that case-based learning is a suitable instructional approach because it encourages students to analyze real-world problems in a more active and reflective manner (Fatimah et al., 2023). These studies have strong relevance to the present research because they all emphasize the importance of contextual learning, direct experience, and the analysis of real-life situations. Therefore, the implementation of case-based learning through field observation assignments is considered relevant for improving students' understanding of the roles and functions of mosques, since this subject matter cannot be adequately understood only at a theoretical level, but must also be connected to the socio-religious realities encountered directly in the community.

Based on the explanation above, this study is important to undertake in order to improve the learning process so that it becomes more active, contextual, and meaningful. This study aims to enhance students' understanding of the roles and functions of mosques through the implementation of case-based learning combined with field observation assignments. Through this approach, students are expected not only to understand the concept of the mosque theoretically, but also to relate it to socio-religious realities in society.

## Methods

### Research Type and Approach

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) as its research approach. CAR was selected because it is a form of reflective inquiry conducted by educators to improve instructional practices encountered directly in the classroom. Mertler (2021) explains that *action research* is a form of *teacher inquiry* used to address practical problems through systematic and reflective action. In a similar vein, Crawford emphasizes that *action research* is a practical and evidence-based approach that can be used to enhance the quality of teaching and learning through critical reflection on instructional practice. Therefore, CAR was considered appropriate for this study because it enabled the lecturer to improve the learning process directly through the implementation of case-based learning combined with field observation assignments (Crawford, 2022).

## Research Design

This study adopted a two-cycle Classroom Action Research design, with each cycle consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. During the planning stage, the researcher prepared the instructional materials, the case-based learning scenarios, the field observation assignment sheets, and the data collection instruments. During the action stage, the lecturer implemented the instructional activities based on the prepared design. During the observation stage, the researcher and collaborator documented the learning process and recorded students' responses throughout the implementation of the intervention. During the reflection stage, the observation results were analyzed to determine the improvements required for the subsequent cycle. This design is consistent with the study of Choden and Kijkuakul, who applied the plan-act-observe-reflect sequence in Classroom Action Research to improve learning processes in a gradual and continuous manner (Choden, 2020). The cycle procedure is illustrated in the following figure:

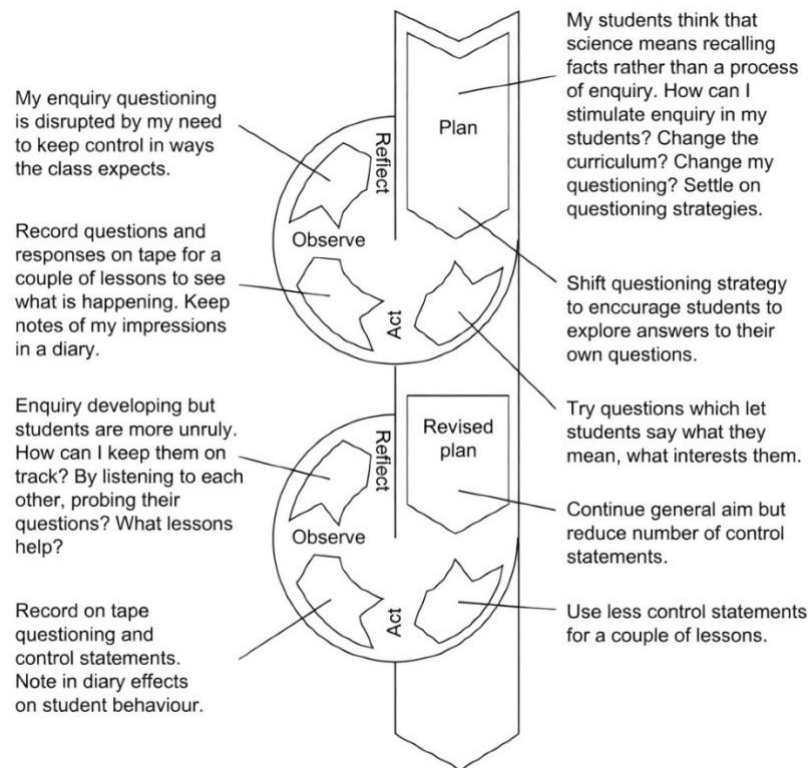


Figure 1: The cycle procedure (Kemmis & Taggart, 1998)

## Research Participants and Setting

This study was conducted at Politeknik Negeri Banyuwangi, with the research participants consisting of students from the class that became the focus of the intervention. In

Classroom Action Research, participants are selected directly from the class experiencing instructional problems, because the primary purpose of the study is not to generate broad generalizations but to improve teaching and learning practices within a specific classroom context. Nugent, Malik, and Hollingsworth explain that *action research* originates from real problems encountered by educators in their own local teaching contexts, making the classroom the primary site for instructional improvement (Nugent & Malik, 2012). Accordingly, the research setting and participants in this study were determined based on the need to improve learning practices in the Islamic Religious Education course delivered in the selected class.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Data in this study were collected through learning achievement tests, observation, documentation, and field observation assignment sheets. The learning achievement tests were used to measure students' level of understanding of the roles and functions of mosques. Observation was used to record students' engagement during the learning process, including attention, participation in discussion, group collaboration, and the ability to present observational findings. Documentation was used to collect physical evidence of the implementation process, such as photographs of classroom activities, discussion notes, and student worksheets. Meanwhile, the field observation assignment sheet was used to guide students in observing the religious, educational, *dakwah*, social, and community empowerment functions performed by mosques within the community. Pentón Herrera emphasizes that *action research* should employ multiple forms of data, both quantitative and qualitative, so that researchers can obtain a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the changes occurring during the intervention (Herrera, 2018).

### **Data Analysis Technique**

The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were obtained from students' learning achievement test results and were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as mean scores and percentages of learning achievement. Qualitative data were obtained from observations, documentation, and reflective notes, and were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The integration of these two forms of analysis is essential in Classroom Action Research because it evaluates not only changes in students' learning outcomes but also changes in the learning process occurring during the intervention. Nugent, Malik, and Hollingsworth explain that *action research* can combine numerical and descriptive data to provide a more comprehensive account of the effectiveness of an instructional intervention (Nugent & Malik, 2012).

### **Data Validity**

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through technical triangulation, namely by comparing data obtained from learning achievement tests, observation, documentation, and field observation assignment sheets. The use of multiple data collection techniques was intended to

strengthen the credibility of the findings and minimize the limitations that might arise if only a single type of data were used. In addition, this study also considered research ethics. Abed argues that ethical considerations should not be limited to the beginning of the research process, but must be maintained throughout the entire study. Two particularly important ethical aspects are informed consent and participant protection (Abed, 2015). Therefore, students were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, the academic use of the data, and the assurance that their identities would remain confidential throughout the research process.

## Findings

### Students' Initial Condition

Before the implementation of case-based learning through field observation assignments, the teaching of the roles and functions of mosques in the Islamic Religious Education course at Politeknik Negeri Banyuwangi was still largely conducted in a theoretical manner through lectures and discussions. Under these conditions, students mainly received concepts verbally from the lecturer, so their understanding of the mosque had not yet developed in a contextual manner. In general, students were already familiar with the mosque as a place of worship, but not all of them were able to explain it comprehensively as a center of education, *dakwah*, social service, youth development, and community empowerment. This study was conducted at Politeknik Negeri Banyuwangi; therefore, the vocational higher education context, which requires a close relationship between theory and field realities, became an important consideration in this research.

After the initial learning process, the students were given a *pre-test* to measure their prior understanding of the topic. The results showed that, out of 23 students, the mean score was only 67.7. The lowest score was 56, while the highest score was 84. These findings indicate that the students' initial understanding of the roles and functions of mosques was still not optimal and that a more contextual, participatory, and experience-based learning strategy was required.

### Development in Cycle I and Cycle II

In response to this initial condition, an instructional intervention was implemented through case-based learning integrated with field observation assignments. In Cycle I, students were directed to analyze cases related to the roles and functions of mosques and then connect them with direct observations of mosques in the community. Through this activity, students began to relate theoretical concepts to real conditions in the field. However, at this stage, the students were still adapting to a learning model that required them not only to understand the material but also to observe, record, and analyze facts found directly in the field. In practice, some students still tended to describe their observations in general terms and had not yet fully connected their field findings to the functions of the mosque in an analytical way. Even so, Cycle I still showed a positive impact on learning outcomes, with the mean score increasing to 77.2. At this stage, the lowest score rose to 68, while the highest score reached 88. The documentation of Cycle I can be seen in the following figure:



Figure 2: documentation of Cycle I

The reflection on Cycle I showed that students needed clearer guidance in interpreting the cases, focusing their observations, and linking the observation results to the concept of the roles and functions of mosques. Therefore, in Cycle II, the learning process was improved by clarifying the focus of the cases, specifying the aspects that had to be observed in the field, and guiding students to organize their observation results in a more systematic and argumentative manner. These improvements made the students better prepared for discussion, more structured in presenting their findings, and more capable of explaining the relationship between theory and the socio-religious practices carried out by mosques. The documentation of Cycle II can be seen in the following figure:



Figure 3: The documentation of Cycle II

The impact of the improvements made in Cycle II was reflected in a further increase in learning outcomes. The students' mean score in Cycle II reached 83.3, with the lowest score being 76 and the highest score being 92. The data also showed that all 23 students experienced score improvement from the *pre-test* stage to Cycle II. Thus, case-based learning through field observation assignments was proven to produce consistent progress at each stage of the intervention. The following table presents the summary of the students' mean scores at each stage.

No.	Student Name	Pre-test	Cycle I	Cycle II
1	Student 1	64	76	80
2	Student 2	72	80	88
3	Student 3	56	72	76
4	Student 4	68	76	84
5	Student 5	60	76	80
6	Student 6	76	88	92
7	Student 7	64	72	80
8	Student 8	68	80	84
9	Student 9	60	72	76
10	Student 10	68	76	80
11	Student 11	60	68	80
12	Student 12	64	72	76
13	Student 13	60	68	80
14	Student 14	56	68	76
15	Student 15	80	88	92
16	Student 16	72	84	88
17	Student 17	84	88	92
18	Student 18	72	80	88
19	Student 19	76	84	88
20	Student 20	72	80	84
21	Student 21	68	76	84
22	Student 22	76	80	88
23	Student 23	60	72	80
Average		67,7	77,2	83,3

## Discussion

The implementation of case-based learning through field observation assignments showed a clear improvement in students' learning outcomes. Quantitatively, the mean score increased from 67.7 in the *pre-test* to 77.2 in Cycle I, and then increased again to 83.3 in Cycle II. This indicates a total increase of 15.6 points from the initial condition to the end of the intervention. This improvement suggests that a learning strategy linking case analysis with field experience was able to strengthen students' understanding of the roles and functions of mosques.

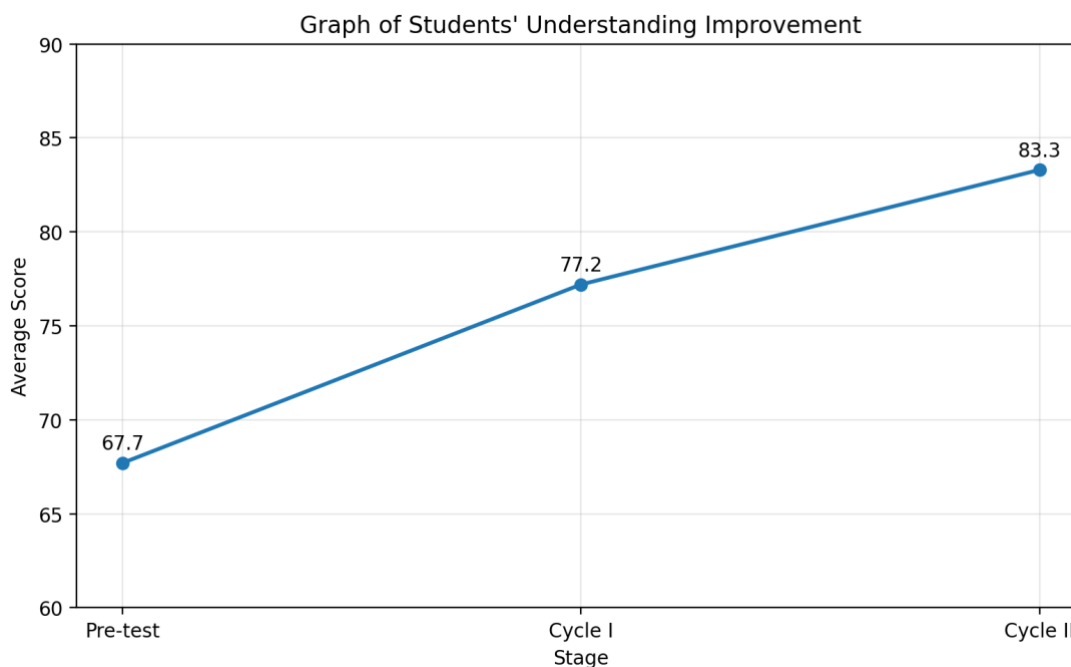


Figure 4: The improvement in students' learning outcomes

This improvement indicates that students benefited from a learning process that connected conceptual understanding with direct observation in the field. At the beginning of the study, many students seemed to understand the mosque mainly in normative terms, especially as a place of worship. After being engaged in case analysis and field observation, however, they began to recognize the mosque as a social and educational institution that also performs *dakwah*, youth development, and community empowerment functions. The combination of classroom discussion and field-based inquiry therefore helped students move from abstract understanding toward more concrete and contextual comprehension.

The progress observed in Cycle I was meaningful, although it had not yet fully reflected the expected depth of analysis. Some students were still inclined to report their observations descriptively and had difficulty linking field findings to the broader conceptual framework of mosque functions. This suggests that initial exposure to field-based tasks was helpful, but students still required clearer scaffolding to interpret what they observed in a more analytical

way.

The improvement in Cycle II demonstrates that better instructional guidance contributed to better student performance. Once the cases were clarified and the observation focus was made more specific, students became more systematic in collecting information and more confident in presenting their findings. Their explanations were also more coherent because they were no longer relying only on general impressions from the field. Instead, they began to connect specific mosque activities with particular functions discussed in class. This pattern suggests that the effectiveness of the intervention did not lie merely in sending students to the field, but in structuring the observation task so that it could support academic reflection.

Another important finding concerns student participation during the learning process. The use of field observation assignments shifted the classroom dynamic from a lecturer-centered model to a more active and inquiry-oriented learning environment, where students functioned as observers, interpreters, and presenters of socio-religious realities.

From a broader perspective, these findings are highly relevant to the context of vocational higher education. At Politeknik Negeri Banyuwangi, where learning is expected to integrate theory and practice, case-based learning through field observation assignments appears to be a suitable approach for developing not only conceptual understanding but also analytical engagement with real community issues.

## Conclusion

The implementation of case-based learning through field observation assignments was proven effective in improving students' learning outcomes on the topic of the roles and functions of mosques in the Islamic Religious Education course. This approach provided students with opportunities to engage actively in analyzing cases, conducting direct observations, and connecting classroom concepts with socio-religious realities in the community. The findings showed that the students' mean score increased from 67.7 in the pre-test stage to 77.2 in Cycle I and 83.3 in Cycle II.

The learning condition, which was initially theoretical and lecture-centered, was transformed into a more contextual, participatory, and reflective process through the implementation of case-based learning and field observation assignments. Students not only showed improvement in cognitive understanding, but also demonstrated growth in analytical ability and learning engagement. Therefore, this model is relevant for application in vocational higher education settings such as Politeknik Negeri Banyuwangi because it is capable of integrating theory, field experience, and more meaningful understanding of the learning material.

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