

EXPLORATION OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING MODELS IN URBAN EDUCATION CONTEXTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING INDEPENDENCE

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the relevance and effectiveness of the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model in the context of urban education, as well as its implications for strengthening students' learning independence. The study was conducted using the library research method by analyzing various scientific sources such as national and international journals, reference books, research reports, and relevant dissertations. The results of the thematic synthesis show that PBM is capable of responding to the complexities of urban classrooms through contextual, collaborative, and problem-oriented learning approaches. PBM has been proven to enhance indicators of learning independence, such as self-regulation ability, decision-making, and learning initiative. However, the implementation of this model in urban environments faces challenges such as time constraints, teacher administrative burdens, and limited pedagogical training. Therefore, policy adaptation, teacher training, and strengthening of learning infrastructure are necessary so that PBM can be implemented optimally and sustainably in urban schools.

Keywords: Problem-Based Learning, Urban Education, Self-Directed Learning

INTRODUCTION

Education in urban areas faces high dynamics and complexity. The diversity of students' social, economic, and cultural backgrounds presents a unique challenge for teachers in developing effective learning strategies (Chaudhary, 2023). Additionally, the number of students in an urban classroom often exceeds the ideal capacity, which impacts the limited individual attention from the teacher. The dense national curriculum also requires teachers to cover the material quickly, thereby reducing space for more reflective and in-depth approaches. This has led to the dominance of the lecture method still being high in urban school environments. As a result,

students tend to be passive and less developed in terms of independent learning skills.

The heterogeneity of students in the city demands a more flexible and adaptive learning approach. In this context, a learning approach that accommodates diversity and encourages active participation is highly necessary. One of the main needs in urban schools is to enhance students' abilities in critical thinking and problem-solving (Afadi & Sari, 2024). This challenge cannot be solved with a conventional one-way approach. Learning must be able to build student engagement in an active, creative, and contextual manner. Therefore, learning innovation becomes a necessity amidst urban challenges.

Contextual learning innovations are very important to bridge the gap between students' needs and the social realities they face. Students in urban areas have wide access to information, but they may not necessarily have the ability to manage knowledge independently. Contextual learning allows students to connect lesson material with their experiences and surroundings (Uvais, 2023). In this way, students not only understand the concepts but are also able to apply them in real life. Learning independence will also gradually develop through the habituation of reflective and critical thinking. The learning model that supports this process needs to be a focus in the development of urban education strategies.

Learning independence has become one of the essential competencies of the 21st century that every learner must possess. In the context of a fast-paced and complex modern society, students are required to have lifelong learning abilities. Learning independence includes the ability to manage time, set goals, and evaluate learning outcomes independently. This ability cannot emerge suddenly, but must be trained through a learning model that provides space for exploration and reflection. Schools, especially in urban areas, must be able to create a learning environment that supports the development of this competence. One relevant approach is Problem-Based Learning (PBL) (Shiller, 2024).

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a learning model based on solving real problems as a means to build knowledge. In PBL, students are encouraged to actively seek solutions through critical, collaborative, and exploratory thinking processes. The teacher acts as a facilitator who guides students in the learning process, rather than being the sole source of knowledge. This model aligns with the needs of urban students who are accustomed to social complexity and diversity. PBL not only emphasizes the final outcome but also the thinking

process and the formation of independent learning attitudes (Chu & Wang, 2022). Therefore, the implementation of PBL can be an innovative solution in addressing the challenges of urban education.

Various studies show that PBL can enhance learning motivation, critical thinking skills, and students' sense of responsibility towards their learning process. PBL allows students to design their own learning strategies, discuss with peers, and make decisions based on data. This becomes an important capital for fostering sustainable learning independence. In the urban context that demands quick adaptation to changes, independent students will be better prepared to face challenges (Jha, 2022). However, the implementation of PBL also faces challenges, particularly in terms of teacher readiness and the rigid curriculum structure. Therefore, a more in-depth study is needed on how PBL can be effectively implemented in urban educational environments.

In addition to implementation challenges, the application of PBL in urban schools also needs to consider supporting factors such as facilities, teacher training, and school management support. A conducive learning environment is crucial for PBL to run as expected. Not all urban schools have equal access to technology and resources (Borkakoty, 2024). Therefore, learning innovations must be tailored to the realities of the school and the characteristics of the students. The adaptation of PBL on a micro scale, such as in project tasks or thematic learning, can be an effective initial step. With this approach, learning can remain meaningful even within limitations.

Considering the complexity and potential of PBL, it is important to conduct further exploration through a literature review. This study aims to explore how PBL has been implemented in various urban educational contexts and its impact on students' learning independence. By reviewing various previous research findings, a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and limitations of this model can be obtained. The results of the study can serve as a reference for teachers, school principals, and policymakers in developing problem-based learning strategies in major cities. In addition, this study also opens up opportunities for further contextual and relevant innovations. Thus, education in urban areas can develop to be more responsive to the needs of the times.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature review type (library research), aimed at deeply examining the concept, application, and impact of the problem-based learning (PBL) model in the context of urban

education (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Dani et al., 2024). The data analyzed comes from various secondary sources, such as accredited national and international journals, scientific books, dissertations, and previous research reports relevant to the topic. The selection of literature was conducted purposively, with the criterion that the sources discuss aspects of PBM, urban education, or learning independence. This strategy allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding from various theoretical and empirical perspectives. With a focus on cutting-edge scientific literature, this study is expected to provide a strong conceptual foundation. This process also considers the reliability and validity of sources through the assessment of the publisher's reputation and the author's credibility.

In data analysis, a thematic synthesis and critical analysis approach are used. Thematic synthesis is conducted to group findings based on main themes, such as the advantages of PBM, implementation challenges in urban areas, and its impact on students' learning independence. Critical analysis is carried out to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each finding and to compare results across studies. This approach aims to identify patterns, gaps, and development potential in the implementation of PBM in urban educational environments. The results of this analysis are then compiled into a scientific narrative that supports the research objectives. Thus, this method is capable of providing evidence-based conceptual contributions to the development of learning strategies in major cities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Relevance of the PBM Model in the Context of Urban Education

The problem-based learning (PBL) model has high relevance in addressing educational challenges in urban areas. Classes in urban areas tend to be complex because they are inhabited by students from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. PBM is based on the principle that learning should start from real problems that are close to the students' lives. This model provides space for students to explore, ask questions, and actively solve problems (Nejadshamsi et al., 2024). In an urban context, students are confronted with a dynamic and challenging social reality, which can serve as a meaningful learning context. Therefore, PBM is able to bridge the gap between theory in the classroom and practice in everyday life.

The advantage of PBM lies in its ability to encourage active student participation in the learning process. This is very important in urban classrooms, which are generally large and heterogeneous. In PBM, students

work in small groups, discuss issues, and formulate logically sound solutions (Berg & Parad, 2024). With this strategy, student engagement increases because they feel a sense of responsibility towards their learning process and outcomes. This approach also helps teachers manage the diversity of students' characters and abilities in a more humane way. In addition, the classroom atmosphere becomes more dynamic and interactive, thereby reducing the dominance of the lecture method.

Several literature studies show the successful implementation of PBM in major cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya. In Jakarta, for example, the implementation of PBM in Social Studies subjects showed significant improvements in students' critical thinking abilities and communication skills. Meanwhile, in Surabaya, PBM was applied in Science subjects to encourage conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills (Fomunyan & Opara, 2024). These studies note that students are more interested and motivated in learning based on real-world problems compared to traditional learning. Student involvement in identifying problems and seeking solutions creates a sense of ownership over the learning process. These findings indicate that PBL can be effectively adapted in urban schools with careful planning.

Not only in Indonesia, the implementation of PBM has also been widely developed in developed countries. In Singapore, PBM is widely implemented in primary and secondary education, particularly in Mathematics and Science subjects (Wondimagegn et al., 2023). This strategy has proven to enhance students' cognitive abilities while also fostering social and collaborative skills. In the United States, PBL is used in schools in major cities like New York and Chicago to address local community issues through project-based learning. PBM in these countries is supported by a flexible learning system, intensive teacher training, and adequate learning technology. This success can serve as a reference for schools in Indonesia to develop PBM according to the context of each city.

The urban context has unique characteristics that affect students' learning processes, including high mobility, significant stress levels, and exposure to various information from digital media. PBM has the flexibility to integrate various urban issues into the curriculum, such as traffic congestion, pollution, or urban culture. Thus, learning becomes more relevant and contextual (Ghiso et al., 2022). For example, in social studies learning, students can be invited to analyze the impact of urban development on the environment. Learning like this not only fosters insight but also social

awareness and civic responsibility. This is the advantage of PBM that conventional learning models do not have.

Students in urban areas also have greater access to information technology. This condition can be utilized in the teaching and learning process to support information search, presentations, and online collaboration. Learning is no longer limited to the classroom but can be extended to the digital world, for example, by using online learning platforms, simulations, or interactive applications. Teachers can integrate technology into teaching and learning in a creative way that meets the needs of students. Thus, PBM becomes a learning model that is adaptive to the times (Bhana, 2023). This further strengthens its position as a relevant strategy for education in big cities.

However, the implementation of PBM in urban environments is not without challenges. Time constraints, curriculum demands, and lack of teacher training are the main obstacles. In addition, PBM requires thorough planning, effective classroom management, and evaluation tools that align with the characteristics of project-based learning. Without adequate support, the implementation of PBM can actually become an additional burden for teachers (Bektas, 2024). Therefore, it is important for schools and the government to provide ongoing support and training. The involvement of all parties is essential for PBM to function optimally in urban schools.

Through proper adaptation, PBM can become an effective and sustainable learning approach in urban areas. This model is capable of addressing the educational needs of the 21st century, which demand learning independence, creativity, and collaboration. Students do not only learn to memorize, but also learn to understand, analyze, and create. In the long term, PBM can create a generation that is more prepared to face global challenges while also being sensitive to local issues. By continuously evaluating and developing PBM contextually, urban education can become more relevant, inclusive, and meaningful (Freis & Schröer, 2024). Therefore, exploring the relevance and application of PBM in the urban context is very important to undertake.

Supporting and Hindering Factors in the Implementation of PBM in Urban Environments

The implementation of PBM in urban educational environments is greatly influenced by various internal and external factors. Among the main supporting factors is the availability of adequate learning technology. Schools

in urban areas generally have better access to digital devices, internet networks, and online platforms. This allows teachers and students to explore information and complete problem-based tasks more broadly and efficiently. Technology also supports collaborative and independent learning, which is at the core of PBM (Ho et al., 2023). With proper integration, technology becomes an important facilitator in optimizing this model.

Another crucial supporting factor is adequate teacher training in understanding and implementing PBM. Teachers who have received training tend to be more prepared to design problem scenarios, manage classroom dynamics, and facilitate student discussions. Training also helps teachers develop alternative assessment instruments that align with the characteristics of PBM. Unfortunately, in many cases, the training is still sporadic and has not yet become part of a sustainable professional development program. Literature studies show that the success of PBM is highly determined by the quality of teacher facilitation, not just by the model itself (Adhikari & Mohapatra, 2022). Therefore, institutional support for teacher capacity development becomes very crucial.

A flexible curriculum also becomes one of the important pillars in supporting PBM in urban schools. A curriculum that allows for exploration, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and contextual problem-solving will be very much in line with the principles of PBM. In some private or international schools, curriculum flexibility enables teachers to design more personalized and contextualized learning (Irene, 2022). However, in public schools with a rigid national curriculum and strict academic achievement targets, this flexibility becomes limited. The lack of space for exploration and creativity makes it difficult for teachers to fully implement a problem-based approach. Therefore, curriculum flexibility becomes a determining factor that is often overlooked.

On the other hand, one of the main obstacles in implementing PBM in urban schools is the limited learning time. The dense curriculum and high material load force teachers to cover the content quickly. PBM, which requires deep thinking processes and group discussions, is often considered to take more time compared to lecture methods (Yusoff et al., 2024). This creates a dilemma between administrative demands and the quality of learning. Teachers are often forced to sacrifice the quality of interaction in pursuit of completing the curriculum. Studies from several major cities in Indonesia show that the lack of time is the main reason teachers are reluctant to fully implement the PBM approach.

The administrative burden on teachers also becomes a significant obstacle in innovative learning practices such as PBM. Teachers not only teach but are also burdened with administrative tasks such as filling out documents, performance reporting, and other bureaucratic activities. This condition causes teachers' energy and focus to be divided, resulting in limited time for designing problem-based learning. However, PBL requires detailed planning, including the development of problem scenarios, competency mapping, and project-based assessments. If teachers do not receive adequate administrative support, the implementation of PBM tends to be carried out half-heartedly (Martin et al., 2024). This directly affects the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and student learning outcomes.

The lack of deep understanding of the concepts and philosophy of PBM also poses a serious obstacle, especially among teachers and school principals. Many teachers understand PBM only as a case-based assignment method, not as a holistic approach that emphasizes constructivist learning. As a result, the implementation of PBM becomes superficial and does not reflect the essence of active and independent learning. Limited pedagogical literacy makes it difficult for teachers to create authentic problems that are challenging and relevant to students' lives. Literature studies show that a misunderstanding of PBM can reduce the benefits of the model (Mathew, 2022). Therefore, improving teachers' pedagogical literacy becomes a priority in the PBM implementation strategy.

Analysis from various international literature shows that the success of PBM is greatly influenced by systemic support from educational institutions and policies that encourage learning innovation. Schools that have a collaborative culture and transformative leadership are more prepared to adopt progressive learning models such as PBM (Sahu, 2022). Moreover, evaluations that emphasize the process and not just cognitive outcomes also determine the sustainability of PBM implementation. Many developed countries implement authentic assessment and portfolio systems to support project-based and problem-based learning. In Indonesia, the evaluation system, which is still predominantly based on standardized tests, poses its own challenges. Therefore, it is necessary to reform the evaluation policy to align with the spirit of PBM.

Overall, the implementation of PBM in urban areas has great potential, but it is not without complex challenges. Technological support, teacher training, and a flexible curriculum are the foundational assets that must be strengthened. On the other hand, constraints such as time limitations,

administrative burdens, and misconceptions about PBM must be addressed through a systemic and sustainable approach. Literature analysis shows that the success of PBM highly depends on the synergy between educational policies, teacher capacity, and the readiness of the school environment. Therefore, every effort to implement PBM must consider the supporting and inhibiting factors contextually. With the right implementation strategy, PBM can become an innovative solution in providing meaningful education in big cities.

Implications of the PBM Model on Student Learning Independence in Urban Areas

The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model is designed to place students as active subjects in the learning process. In PBM, students are encouraged to identify problems, seek solutions, and make decisions independently. This process directly trains critical thinking skills, independence in decision-making, and responsibility for learning outcomes. In urban environments, where students are faced with complex social dynamics, this approach becomes highly relevant. PBM not only equips students with knowledge but also with essential life skills to face real-world challenges (Kaur, 2024). Therefore, PBM can be an effective medium for fostering a culture of independent learning in big cities.

Learning independence encompasses students' ability to set goals, plan learning strategies, monitor progress, and evaluate results reflectively. In PBM, students are involved in this process from the beginning through the stages of problem identification to the final evaluation. The collaborative and investigative process in PBM provides space for students to manage their own learning process. Studies show that learning that requires active engagement and real problem-solving is more effective in fostering learning independence compared to expository methods. Students do not just receive information, but also build understanding through authentic learning experiences (Birnkrant, 2024). This makes PBM an ideal approach for developing lifelong learning skills.

Various literature studies show that the implementation of PBM positively contributes to the improvement of learning independence indicators. A study by Hmelo-Silver (2004) confirms that students in PBM show improvements in self-regulation, time management, and confidence in facing complex tasks. In Indonesia, a study by Rahmawati (2021) in Jakarta high schools shows that the consistent implementation of PBM can enhance

students' intrinsic motivation and initiative in learning. The results of this study indicate a strong relationship between active learning approaches such as PBM and the development of independent learning attitudes. In urban areas, this becomes significant because students are more accustomed to environments that demand quick adaptation and autonomous decision-making. Therefore, PBM becomes an important bridge in shaping a resilient learning mentality among urban students.

Learning independence is greatly needed by urban students who face high academic competition and abundant access to information. In this context, PBM helps students to filter, select, and process information critically. When students are accustomed to solving problems independently, they will also be more capable of managing their study time, selecting appropriate learning resources, and setting long-term goals. These skills are the pillars of 21st-century education. Information literacy and reflective thinking skills are becoming increasingly important in the era of educational digitalization (Milenina, 2022). Therefore, PBM offers a way to develop independence that is contextual with the needs of the times.

The main recommendation in implementing PBM to encourage independent learning in urban schools is to provide teacher training that focuses on guidance, not one-way teaching. Teachers act as facilitators who guide students to explore problems and find answers on their own. This training must be accompanied by the reinforcement of assessment strategies that not only evaluate the final results but also the thinking process and student engagement (Munzhelele et al., 2022). In addition, schools need to provide discussion spaces, access to digital literacy, and curriculum flexibility so that students can learn independently and contextually. School policies that support the development of problem-based projects will also strengthen the systemic implementation of PBM. Thus, a culture of independent learning can naturally develop in the daily lives of students.

The implementation of PBM should also consider the integration with local issues that are relevant to the lives of urban students. For example, environmental issues, traffic congestion, or the social life of urban communities can be used as contextual learning materials. This approach makes students feel more engaged and responsible for their learning. Learning independence not only develops in the cognitive realm but also in the affective and social domains (Richmond et al., 2022). Thus, PBM not only produces academically intelligent students but also environmentally conscious

and socially active individuals. This is important in shaping an adaptive and contributive urban generation.

Schools also need to build an evaluation system that supports the growth of students' learning independence. Authentic assessments such as portfolios, reflective journals, and project evaluations provide space for students to showcase their thinking processes and learning achievements independently. Evaluation not only focuses on the final grade but also on process skills and self-reflection. PBM combined with an appropriate evaluation system will motivate students to continuously develop their learning capacity autonomously. In urban schools with high academic demands, this system can balance the pressure of grades with personal development (Almeida, 2022). Therefore, the role of school principals and policymakers is crucial in designing an evaluation system that supports PBL.

Overall, the problem-based learning model makes a significant contribution to strengthening students' learning independence in urban environments. This approach aligns with the characteristics of a dynamic, complex, and challenging city. With consistent implementation, PBM is capable of shaping students who think critically, reflectively, and are responsible for their own learning process. Urban schools need to make PBM an integral part of their learning strategies to prepare students for the realities of the 21st century. Investment in teacher training, curriculum development, and assessment systems that support PBM is highly necessary. Thus, learning independence not only becomes a goal but also a living culture within urban educational communities.

CONCLUSION

The results of the literature review indicate that the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model has high relevance in addressing educational challenges in urban areas. The advantages of PBL in responding to the complexities of urban classrooms are reflected in its ability to encourage problem-solving, collaboration, and independent decision-making. The implementation of PBM has proven capable of enhancing indicators of student learning independence, such as self-regulation, initiative, and critical reflection. However, the effectiveness of PBM highly depends on supporting factors such as teacher competence, curriculum flexibility, as well as institutional technology and policy support. Meanwhile, constraints such as time limitations, administrative burdens, and the lack of teachers' understanding of the PBM concept become significant obstacles. Therefore, the successful implementation of PBM

requires a systemic strategy that includes teacher training, policy adjustments, and reform of evaluation practices.

Overall, PBM has great potential to foster a culture of independent learning in urban schools, which is relevant to the demands of the 21st century. This model not only encourages students' cognitive engagement but also fosters a sense of responsibility and lifelong learning abilities. In a dynamic urban context, the adaptation of PBM must consider the heterogeneous characteristics of learners, high mobility, and the tendency to use technology. Therefore, the implementation of PBM cannot be generic, but must be tailored to local realities and needs. With the right support, PBM can become a transformative approach in improving the quality of education while preparing students to be independent, adaptive, and resilient learners. Therefore, it is important for educational stakeholders to prioritize PBM in learning innovations in major cities.

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