

## **Implementation of Contextual Learning Strategies in Small Class Sunday Schools**

**Luciana Haryanto<sup>1</sup>, Yusep Arimatea<sup>2</sup>, Lasmauli Gurning<sup>3</sup>, Napoleon Manalu<sup>4</sup>**

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kadesi Bogor, Indonesia

[lucianaharyanto@gmail.com](mailto:lucianaharyanto@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [yuseparimatea@gmail.com](mailto:yuseparimatea@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>, [lasmauli71@gmail.com](mailto:lasmauli71@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>,

[napoleon.rumabutar.manalu@gmail.com](mailto:napoleon.rumabutar.manalu@gmail.com)<sup>4</sup>

---

**Keywords**

Contextual learning  
strategy, Sunday school,  
Small class

---

**Abstract**

Effective learning strategies are very important in achieving learning objectives, especially in the context of Christian Religious Education in Sunday Schools. One of the strategies that can be applied is Contextual Teaching and Learning. This research aims to analyze the implementation of contextual learning strategies in small class Sunday School. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. The participants consisted of Sunday School teachers and small class students. The results show that the implementation of contextual learning strategies in small class Sunday School includes seven main components: constructivism, discovery, questioning, learning community, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment. This strategy is effective in improving students' understanding and engagement in the learning process. The implementation of contextual learning strategies in small class Sunday School is proven to facilitate meaningful learning that is relevant to students' daily lives. This strategy can be an alternative for teachers in designing and implementing Christian Religious Education learning that is more contextual and effective.

---

*Corresponding Author* : Luciana Haryanto

E-mail: [lucianaharyanto@gmail.com](mailto:lucianaharyanto@gmail.com)



## **INTRODUCTION**

Learning is a process of interaction, both between humans and each other or between humans and the surrounding environment (Anggraeni and Effane 2022) . This process is directed to achieve goals related to cognitive, affective or psychomotor development goals (Abdullah 2017) . The goal of cognitive development is an intellectual development process that is closely related to increasing aspects of knowledge, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Nainggolan and Daeli 2021) .

In the process of learning to think, knowledge is not obtained as a result of transfer from other people, but knowledge is obtained through interaction with existing objects, phenomena, experiences and the environment, and must be interpreted independently by each individual. (Sutarjo Adisusilo 2016) . Knowledge is considered correct when the knowledge is useful in facing and solving problems or phenomena that arise (Firdaus n.d.) . The thinking learning model emphasizes student activities to seek understanding of objects, analyze and construct them so that new knowledge is formed within the individual (Hamruni 2015) .

The psychological basis of this strategy is the flow of cognitive psychology. According to this school, learning is essentially a mental event, not a behavioral event (habit). (Darman 2020) . Human behavior is not merely physical movement, but what is more important is the existence of driving factors that move it (Setiawan 2017) . Every human being will forever have needs that are inherent within him, and that is what drives humans to behave.

Learning is an active individual process in building knowledge and achieving goals (Masgumelar and Mustafa 2021). The learning process does not depend on external influences, but is very dependent on the individual learning (student centered) (Pertiwi, Nurfatimah, and Hasna 2022). Human behavior is only an expression that can be observed as a result of internal existence which is essentially personal. Brower and Hilgard explain that cognitive theory is concerned with how they use this knowledge to behave more effectively.

Writing about Application Strategy Learning Contextual in Schools Sunday Small Classes is expected can useful, good in a neither way theoretical nor practice. Benefit writing, including : Benefits Theoretical - Writing This can add literature Christian , become contribution in teaching , adding outlook about strategy learning contextual at school Sunday. Benefit Practice -Share church And servant God, research this become Wrong One contribution for serve child school Sunday. For school teacher's week, writing this can become important handlein learning, so they can apply strategy effective learning in schools Sunday.

Study this aim for explain How strategy learning contextual can become contribution for school teachers Sunday and can give guidelines for apply strategy effective learning. Besides that, research This Also aim For explain How strategy learning contextual can become strategy learning for child school expected week can give knowledge and Skills.

Christian religious education is an important aspect of a child's spiritual and moral development. Sunday school serves as a key platform for providing Christian religious education to children outside of the family setting. However, teaching Christian religious education to young children aged 3-5 years in the Sunday school context presents unique challenges. This age group has distinct physical, mental, emotional, and social characteristics that require specialized teaching approaches (Immanuel, Setiawan, And Shalom n.d.) .

Previous research has highlighted the effectiveness of contextual learning strategies in improving student engagement and learning outcomes in various educational settings (Anggraeni and Effane 2022). Contextual learning emphasizes connecting educational content to students' real-life experiences and making learning relevant and meaningful (Hamruni 2015) . However, limited research has explored the application of contextual learning strategies in the context of Christian religious education for young children in Sunday school.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of contextual learning strategies in small class Sunday school settings for children aged 3-5 years. The findings of this research are expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this study can contribute to the literature on Christian religious education and pedagogical approaches suitable for young children in the Sunday school context. Practically, the research findings can serve as a valuable resource for Sunday school teachers, equipping them with effective strategies to deliver engaging and meaningful Christian religious education to their young students.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The study employs a descriptive qualitative research approach. Data were collected through several methods. Participatory observation was utilized, where the researchers actively participated in and observed various learning processes and activities conducted by the Sunday School Commission. Additionally, in-depth interviews were carried out with Sunday school children aged 3-5 years, Sunday school teachers, and parents. Document analysis was also employed as a data collection technique. The population in this study was all Sunday school children, totaling 7 people, and all of them were used as research samples. The data collection technique used is observation, where the researcher acts as a carrier of the material. Data collected through observation is then processed as part of learning activities, which include making lesson plans, preparing learning media, and assessing mastery of the material. Each cycle is carried out for 30-40 minutes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Sunday School Children in Sunday School Christian Religious Education (aged 3-5 years)

Christian religious education needs to be taught to children as early as possible. Apart from family, the church also plays a very important role in Christian religious education (Immanuel, Setiawan, And Shalom n.d.) . That is why in the church there is a Sunday School which aims to teach Christian religious education to children outside the family. Children are also members of the Church of Christ, by virtue of their baptism. The aim of teaching Christian religious education to children is for children to know Christ as their personal Savior. Another goal is so that they can love each other and continue to learn the truth of God's Word.

#### a Characteristics of Childhood Sunday School Students (aged 3-5 years)

Teaching Christian Religious Education to children is more difficult than teaching Christian Religious Education to adults. Why is that? Children need a lot of media to achieve understanding of material. Basically, a child is influenced by his environment from the time he is in the womb. However, Christian religious education for children is very important, because it will have an external influence on their adult faith in the future.

#### b Special Characteristics of Sunday School Age Children (Toddlers)

In general, children at this age tend to learn from what they see. In general, their emotions are still unstable. Sunday School should be a warm home for them. The problems that arise in teaching children at this age are different from the problems that arise in adult children. Therefore, as Sunday School teachers, we need to understand their characteristics and how to deal with them. Children at this age have their own characteristics.

### Christian Religion Teacher in Sunday School (ages 3-5 years)

As with teachers in public schools, being a teacher in Sunday School also has a very important role, especially for children aged 3-5 years. A Sunday School teacher has a sacred spiritual position because it is a calling from God (Wade 2019). A Sunday School teacher has seven important duties, namely: teaching, shepherding, fatherhood, giving, role modeling, evangelizing, praying and seizing opportunities.

However, in practice these seven tasks are very difficult. There are many things we need to understand before we become Sunday School teachers. To achieve this goal, in Sunday School, Christian Religious Education must be taught seriously.

**Table 1 Research Findings**

| <b>Characteristics of Sunday School Children</b>                                   | <b>The methods applied</b>                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Physical:</i>                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 1. Very active, moves a lot                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The classroom must be spacious to hold activities.</li> <li>• Don't do activities that are too strenuous.</li> </ul>                                |
| 2. Get tired quickly.                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty sitting still for too long.</li> </ul>                                                                                                   |
| 3. Large and small muscles begin to develop and cannot yet regulate muscle joints. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The study area must be clean and have ventilation.</li> <li>• They like to sing with movement. Don't force them to sing at a high pitch.</li> </ul> |
| 4. Easily hurt.                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use bright lights and use clear words.</li> </ul>                                                                                                   |
| 5. The vocal cords have begun to develop.                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 6. Likes to see and hear things.                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                              |

| Characteristics of Sunday School Children                                      | The methods applied                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Mental:</i>                                                                 |                                                                                                                  |
| 1. Limited concentration power.                                                | • Story time is approximately 10 minutes. We have to tell them repeatedly.                                       |
| 2. Curiosity is great.                                                         | • Give simple answers to what they ask.                                                                          |
| 3. Limited vocabulary.                                                         | • Speak clearly and use simple words to them.                                                                    |
| 4. Learn through the five senses.                                              | • Use props to convey material                                                                                   |
| 5. Imitates the actions of others                                              | • Teachers must be role models.                                                                                  |
| <i>Emotion:</i>                                                                |                                                                                                                  |
| 1. Afraid of strangers and strangers.                                          | • Use classes with the same model.                                                                               |
| 2. His emotions are unstable.                                                  | • Must be friendly and provide a sense of security to children.                                                  |
| 3. Be sensitive to the surrounding environment.                                | • Class settings must be appropriate and balanced.                                                               |
| 4. It's easy to feel jealous.                                                  | • Don't protect certain children and must provide love as a whole.                                               |
| <i>Association:</i>                                                            |                                                                                                                  |
| 1. Start looking for friends.                                                  | • Encourage him to get along with all his friends.                                                               |
| 2. Egocentric, egotistical.                                                    | • Teach them to enjoy things with other people and love each other.                                              |
| <i>Spirituality:</i>                                                           |                                                                                                                  |
| 1. Imitates adult behavior, including attitudes towards God.                   | • In addition to teaching Bible truths, set appropriate examples.                                                |
| 2. They begin to know the love of Jesus through the love adults have for them. | • Teachers must serve them with love.                                                                            |
| 3. Know how to give thanks.                                                    | • Teach them to give thanks in all things.                                                                       |
| 4. Can be taught to pray.                                                      | • Teach them to pray and instill that Allah will always hear their prayers. Teach about three answers to prayer. |

## Discussion

### Materials liked by Sunday School Children (ages 3-5 years)

Usually each church has its own guidebook/curriculum for teaching Sunday school children. Either it is provided by the central synod or comes from another source. From the many materials presented by the teacher, you can see the materials that are liked by children, especially children aged 3-5 years. Sunday school children at this age like material with various activities. Their energetic demeanor and interesting material will really grab their attention. In general, audio-visual media is very helpful for teaching children at this age. This can be used by teachers to develop good strategies for delivering material.

At this time children will be more active in moving, if so teachers must also take advantage of the special characteristics of these children to be involved as a medium in learning. Contextual strategies will be very important if children can become one of the actors in preaching the word (Mesra 2023). For example, we use them as good examples or involve them in the dialogue process. They will be happy if we ask them questions, because that way they will feel that we are paying attention to them.

The author as a teacher at Sunday school uses an image-based curriculum. Where the material used is in the form of pictures about stories in the Bible. This is very popular with children of this age. Where the material presented is quite interesting and allows them to understand the meaning of the Bible. It doesn't stop there, this curriculum also includes various activities to sharpen the Word in the process of application in daily life. This is a contextualization strategy that according to the author is effective for teaching Sunday school children aged 3-5 years

### Application of image learning methods to increase enthusiasm

The way to do this is by sorting the images in an orderly manner, then making captions on the images and then explaining them. This drawing method can motivate students to learn (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2020). Because this model prioritizes images that can trigger children's attention so they are motivated to learn (Sumual, Pasolang, and Widjaja 2023). So this model prioritizes images as a medium for conveying material. The principles of implementation are presenting information, presenting teaching materials, displaying pictures in teaching materials, then students are asked to arrange the pictures, the teacher confirms the order of the pictures and finally the teacher provides conclusions, reflection and evaluation.

This drawing method is an alternative that is widely used by teachers, if students still do not really understand the literal meaning (Dunn 2021). The lack of activeness and enthusiasm requires teachers to find an interactive learning model so that students' learning patterns increase (Chen, Wang, and Chen 2014). To stimulate active and non-boring learning for students, drawing method is one of the alternatives that can be used. In the context of delivering God's Word in Sunday school, this learning model requires the help of pictures to help students understand God's Word more clearly. A good picture for this model is a picture of a Bible story that is adapted to the subject matter.

The researcher revealed that in teaching Sunday School children, creative and innovative models in teaching the Word of God must be applied, especially for early childhood, in order to meet all the spiritual needs of children in today's generation. By applying the drawing method to Sunday School children, it will help to increase children's enthusiasm for the stories of God's word.

This is also an issue related to the lack of children memorizing Bible stories. Putting together pictures and retelling the material in particular was chosen as the solution. The way to do this is as follows:

First, the teacher mentions the skills to be achieved. In this step, the Sunday school teacher should teach the appropriate material. In this way, children can estimate how far they have to go to master it.

Second, present the material. The teacher can motivate the attention of children who are not ready. Motivating can stimulate children's interest to continue learning. and rewarding children's success, including giving praise at the right time.

Third, the teacher shows pictures related to the material. In presenting the material, the teacher invites children to be involved in the learning process.

Fourth, the teacher chooses children in turn to arrange the pictures in a logical order. The available pictures are asked to be sorted or modified by the children. This learning pattern can also be used as a teaching tool for Sunday school children. Children can use the drawing method to understand learning activities, using the drawing method makes children more enthusiastic, children do not get bored quickly, children prefer learning by using the drawing method; and children pay more attention to the teacher during the learning process.

**Table 2 Enthusiasm Research Data**

| No. | Things Observed                                                | Score | Percentage |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| 1   | Children understand learning by using media                    | 7     | 100%       |
| 2   | Children are more enthusiastic in learning when using methods  | 7     | 100%       |
| 3   | Children are not bored with learning activities                | 7     | 100%       |
| 4   | Children feel happy with learning activities                   | 7     | 100%       |
| 5   | Children pay more attention to teachers in learning activities | 7     | 100%       |
|     | Average                                                        | 5     | 100%       |

Table on shows that the children's enthusiasm is 100%, which is an excellent measure. So in conclusion, the image method in the material increases children's enthusiasm. The data above also shows that the application of the drawing method has a big contribution for Sunday School children in increasing their enthusiasm

## CONCLUSION

Teaching Sunday School children is as important as teaching any other group (teenagers, young adults, adults, and senior citizens). Teaching in Sunday School also requires special strategies because teaching Sunday School children is more difficult, plus the students are still 3 to 5 years old. Teaching children at this age requires patience and caution. Children at this age still find it difficult to accept the material if we deliver it with the same method as we teach children who can already understand the essence of knowledge. Children at this age tend to learn from what they see and tend to follow adults who are close to them. Contextual learning strategies are very suitable for children of this age. Although children at this age enjoy listening to stories, they cannot listen for long periods of time. Therefore, by linking to everyday events that they are used to and using hands-on practice is more suitable to be applied to children. We must engage children at this age in dialog. We must tell them the word of God, but we must also intersperse it with events that children often experience.

As Sunday School Teachers, let us recognize the characteristics of the children we teach. A great task and responsibility lies in our hands as parents who educate children. Although there are many children who drain energy and provoke emotions in the learning process, it is not something that we should take seriously, let alone retaliate with physical violence. The Bible in Ephesians 6:4 “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Educating us as parents/parents to not plant seeds of hatred in our children. In addition, we must also be able to create a pleasant atmosphere and we must also be an example for them. Let us carry out our calling as Sunday School Teachers well and with a sense of responsibility.

## REFERENCES

- Abdullah, Ramli. 2017. “Pembelajaran Dalam Perspektif Kreativitas Guru Dalam Pemanfaatan Media Pembelajaran.” *Lantanida journal* 4(1): 35–49.
- Anggraeni, Rahayu, and Anne Effane. 2022. “Peranan Guru Dalam Manajemen Peserta Didik.” *Karimah Tauhid* 1(2): 234–39.
- Chen, Yunglung, Yuping Wang, and Nian-Shing Chen. 2014. “Is FLIP Enough? Or Should We Use the FLIPPED Model Instead?” *Computers & Education* 79: 16–27.
- Darman, Regina Ade. 2020. *Belajar Dan Pembelajaran*. Guepedia.
- Dunn, Patricia A. 2021. *Drawing Conclusions: Using Visual Thinking to Understand Complex Concepts in the Classroom*. Teachers College Press.
- Firdaus, Endis. “Implementasi Model Pembelajaran Peningkatan Kemampuan Berpikir1.”
- Hamruni, Hamruni. 2015. “Konsep Dasar Dan Implementasi Pembelajaran Kontekstual.” *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 12(2): 177–87.
- Immanuel, Skxidism, Samuel Agus Setiawan, And Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Syalom. “Korelasi Penerapan Metode Discovery Learning Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dan Motivasi Belajar.”
- Kress, Gunther, and Theo Van Leeuwen. 2020. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. Routledge.
- Masgumelar, Ndaru Kukuh, and Pinton Setya Mustafa. 2021. “Teori Belajar Konstruktivisme Dan Implikasinya Dalam Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran.” *GHAITSA: Islamic Education Journal* 2(1): 49–57.
- Mesra, Romi. 2023. “Strategi Pembelajaran Abad 21.”

- Nainggolan, Alon Mandimpu, and Adventrianis Daeli. 2021. "Analisis Teori Perkembangan Kognitif Jean Piaget Dan Implikasinya Bagi Pembelajaran." *Journal of Psychology Humanlight* 2(1): 31–47.
- Pertiwi, Amalia Dwi, Siti Aisyah Nurfatimah, and Syofiyah Hasna. 2022. "Menerapkan Metode Pembelajaran Berorientasi Student Centered Menuju Masa Transisi Kurikulum Merdeka." *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 6(2): 8839–48.
- Setiawan, M Andi. 2017. *Belajar Dan Pembelajaran*. Uwais Inspirasi Indonesia.
- Sumual, Ferry J N, Eka Pasolang, and Rinawaty Widjaja. 2023. "Metode Picture and Picture Dalam Meningkatkan Antusiasme Anak Sekolah Minggu Dalam Mendengarkan Firman Tuhan." *TELEIOS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 3(1): 11–21.
- Sutarjo Adisusilo, J. 2016. "Konstruktivisme Dalam Pembelajaran."
- Wade, Jumesha Shirvon. 2019. "Sunday School Is Marching on: An Exploration of Children's Perceptions of Church, Sunday School, and a Bible-Based Sunday School Lesson."