

# Implementation of Contextual Learning Methods to Improve Students' Softskills

Verinita<sup>1,\*</sup> John Edwar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Management Study Program, Faculty & Economics, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Management Study Program, Faculty & Economics, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author. Email: [verinitaarsya@eb.unand.ac.id](mailto:verinitaarsya@eb.unand.ac.id), [verinitaarsya@gmail.com](mailto:verinitaarsya@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

The Management Study Program of the Faculty of Economics, Andalas University, offers Services Marketing courses in the even semester. However, evaluation of the previous class indicates that students have difficulties in discussing cases that occur in businesses that manage services. Even though the students understand the concepts and theories discussed in the subject, they are not yet able to provide applicable, original, and logical solutions to problems that occur in the business organization. To overcome these shortcomings, contextual learning methods are applied. This method, which is so far has been practiced to overcome limitations in teaching methods, is centered on students who are innovative. This method is considered appropriate to achieve educational goals based on learning achievement. The contextual learning method is a learning model that links learning material to the real world or actual situations. The results of the evaluation of the learning process in the form of an online questionnaire distributed to students at the end of last semester show that this method is useful because it is able to attract students' interest in learning. It also increases students' motivation and soft skills, especially in communication and team-work. This contextual learning method creates a more conducive classroom atmosphere, improves students' enthusiasm to discuss cases that occur in the service business and problem-solving abilities, and provides good solutions for the desired graduate learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Contextual Learning Methods, Service Marketing course, Softskill, innovative, solution*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the Management Study Program, the Faculty of Economics, Andalas University, the sixth-semester students are offered Services Marketing courses. This subject is compulsory for students who choose Marketing Management as their concentration. Students can take this Service Marketing course if they have passed Marketing Management II.

The Service Marketing course is designed to improve students' understanding of service marketing topics. This course provides an opportunity for students to implement the concept of service marketing in an organization. Topics discussed were an introduction to service marketing, developing service models, managing customer relationships, and implementing strategies in service marketing.

The learning objectives of this course are to enable the students to: a) understand service characteristic ; b) understand the relationship between service marketing, operations management, and human resource management to support service management implementation ; c) apply service marketing principles to organizational activities to solve problems and provide the right solution; d) conduct a critical analysis of developing issues ; e) communicate ideas and solutions to solving problems related to services and f) Understand ethical behavior in service management.

Expected Learning Outcomes (ELO) for the graduate competencies are designed to help students be able to apply logical, critical, systematic, and innovative thinking. The discussion of material is focused on the ability to understand service marketing concepts, analyze and manage the service marketing mix, understand concepts and manage customer interactions in service marketing, understand concepts and implement profitable marketing strategies, and design service blueprints. Teaching materials used so far are in the form of handouts, power points, and understand textbooks as the primary reference.

Implementing a lecturer-centered learning pattern is no longer sufficient to achieve educational goals based on graduate learning outcomes [1]. Due to the rapid development of technology and information, easy access to it changes incompetence that takes place very quickly require flexible learning materials and processes that accommodate participatory democratization in the learning process. Therefore, student-centered learning focuses on learning outcomes through developing creativity, capacity, personality, and student needs in developing independence and finding knowledge [1]

Assessment is carried out to measure the learning outcomes of students who are applied by giving individual assignments, group assignments, quizzes, middle and final exams, and evaluation by distributing questionnaires at the last lecture meeting to assess the effectiveness of the learning methods

applied. Personal assignments were given by giving assignments to read textbooks and students doing resumes each week. Then the students presented their assignments. Based on the results of the distribution of the final scores of the 44 students who took the Service Marketing course, 13.63% got an A and 27.27% got an A-, 38.63% got a B+. This shows good performance for this class. The form of the final exam is in the form of an essay

In the Management study program, the Faculty of Economics, Andalas University, the teaching of Services Marketing courses uses more teaching methods by emphasizing theory. The problem is that students only understand the concept of service marketing without getting enriched and the ability to analyze learning related to the real world. as a consequence, students do not understand the application of this concept in the real world. The learning objectives of this course are not optimally achieved due to a low ability to apply theory in real life as well as the advance of technology.

To improve students' comprehension in Service Marketing courses, it is necessary to apply a learning model, which is contextual methods. The contextual learning method is a learning model that links learning material with the real world that makes learning attractive to students [1]. It is expected that student's motivation increases, ability in communicating and working in teams develops, and participation in the learning process rises.

The characteristics of contextual learning methods are: 1) emphasizing problem solving; 2) introduce that the learning process occurs through multiple contexts; 3) helping students to learn to manage themselves in learning so that they become self-regulated learners; 4) directing teaching in various contexts of student life; 5) encourage students to learn from other students; 6) assessment is carried out on the learning process and outcomes [1].

## 2. METHODS

The teaching method that will be applied to the Service Marketing class is the contextual learning method. The teaching method with the contextual learning model is one of the innovative student-centered teaching patterns that have begun to be practiced to overcome limitations in lecturer-centered teaching methods. This method is currently considered appropriate for achieving educational goals based on learning achievement [1].

The outcome achievement strategy implemented is to collect literature and main textbooks. Then the development of the learning method uses the contextual learning method by preparing a learning plan consisting of several stages, namely; a) checking the competence of the course through the Semester Learning Plan; b) compiling criteria and standards from the learning process of the first meeting to the final meeting; c) providing theme

restrictions so that students know the information they need; d) building student emotions to interact with others; e) create a pleasant atmosphere for students; f) the lecturer explains that if participating in the class will be rewarded; 7) creates opportunities for group discussions outside the classroom by contacting the lecturer via email or making contact by telephone [2].

The development team in this course consists of 2 lecturers who are in charge of providing lecture material, giving assignments from the first meeting to the last lecture meeting, carrying out mid and final exams, and evaluating the learning process in class online. The main textbooks used are the service marketing books written by Christopher Lovelock and Jochen Wirtz which discuss service products, consumers, markets, managing the customer interface and implementing profitable service strategies [3].

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of this learning method is by giving assignments to students in the form of study-cases that occur in a company that manages services. Then the students discussed the case given by the lecturer the previous week and one of the groups presented the results of a case analysis found in managing a service business. The lecturers assessed the results of the case analysis conducted by students and thoroughly discuss the cases and give suggestions.

The stages of learning that will be carried out are as follows. First, the lecturer conveys the learning objectives and evaluates the assignments that have been done by students. The task given to students is to analyze the assignment in the form of cases that occur in service businesses. The task of analyzing cases is a group task. Provide assistance to students if needed. Conduct weekly monitoring on the tasks they are doing. The last stage is to provide formative and summative assessments to students.

There are several ways in which to develop student assessments, namely assigning students to discuss cases given by the lecturer. Assessments are made of the cases discussed and how to find solutions. Then assess the effectiveness of students in solving problems in the company, assessing individual participation during presentations. Giving Middle Examination at the 8th meeting and giving Final Examination in lecture 16. Assessing student responses regarding the development of learning with contextual methods. The last way is to evaluate student grades.

Achievement strategy this research can be done using a curriculum that has been prepared by the Management study program. The learning technology used is to optimize the use of laptops, power point software. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, lectures were conducted online using a platform called the Learning Management System (LMS), which is ilearn

which is owned by Andalas University. With this method the lecturer can present the concepts and materials / materials of Service Marketing lectures, as well as explain examples of cases that occur in the global business-oriented service business. The technology used will help the achievement of learning with contextual learning methods.

The learning process in this course can be carried out with blended learning. Blended learning is also called the mixing of online and offline learning. Usually, students study in the class that the instruction is direct. However, in blended learning, the instructions can be virtual or via online media [4].

An effective blended learning environment is necessary in undertaking innovative through the use of technology in teaching and learning. An examination of learner characteristics/background, design features and learning outcomes as factors for effectiveness can help to inform the design of effective learning environments that involve face-to-face sessions and online aspects. Most of the student characteristics and blended learning design features dealt with are important factors for blended learning effectiveness [5]

Evaluation of the success of the implementation of the semester learning plan for the Service Marketing course is carried out using the following parameters: a) assessing the results of learning outcomes through the middle and final exams, individual assignments, presented group assignments; b) assessing the distribution of final scores that will be obtained by students ; c) the level of attainment of the quality of the learning output is in the form of an increase in the acquisition of final grades of students; d) assessing student responses regarding the development of learning methods with contextual learning methods with a questionnaire in the form of a questionnaire

This learning method is more conducive to class atmosphere and students are also more enthusiastic because students focus on how to discuss cases that occur in service businesses so that students can improve their soft skills and be able to solve problems that occur in business cases given by lecturers and provide quality solutions so that in accordance with the desired graduate learning outcomes.

Revision of the semester learning plan is carried out by developing teaching methods with this contextual method. It is done by providing enrichment to students regarding discussed cases. Lecturers facilitate students by providing current cases following the field of service marketing. In the case given, the lecturer prioritized discussing how to improve hotel services during the Covid 19 pandemic. This was due to a decrease in the number of room occupancy in hotels because some of the events that were originally held in hotels stopped as they followed health protocol rules. By giving assignments to discuss current and relevant cases, it will train students' sensitivity to solve

problems with applicable, original and logical solutions.

Monitoring and evaluation of the contextual learning system have been implemented for eight meetings after the middle exam. Monitoring and evaluation of the learning system activities that have been carried out by distributing online questionnaires via the google form link. The questionnaire contains statements to assess the performance and effectiveness of the learning system using this contextual method. This questionnaire was distributed via the WhatsApp group. The number of students who filled out this link was 36 people. The total number of students is 44, there are about 8 students who did not fill out the questionnaire after the specified time limit

Based on the evaluation of the learning process in the Service Marketing course, several things can be described, namely:

### **1. Discipline and Lecturer Attendance**

For the point of discipline and the presence of lecturers, students stated that the lecturer taught according to the schedule with an average score of 4.36. Students state that lectures are carried out on a schedule so that lectures run smoothly with a fixed schedule from week to week

### **2. Delivery of Teaching Materials**

Based on the results of the questionnaire it can be analyzed that students state that the material provided refers to the predefined main textbook, the material provided is in accordance with the syllabus, emphasizes the ability to analyze, master the teaching material provided, a positive attitude in responding to student comments, assignments given by the lecturer help to understand the material. And lecturers are able to communicate in two directions so that the class atmosphere runs dynamically and pleasantly.

### **3. Assessment System**

Based on the results of the questionnaire filled in by students regarding the assessment system for students who take Marketing Management courses, the students revealed that the lecturer gave the final exam questions according to the material given in class. The lecturer provides an explanation of the assessment criteria in the Service Marketing course. Lecturers also assess the assignments given to students and the results according to the student's performance.

### **4. Lecturer Appearances**

For lecturer performance, students give an assessment that the lecturer teaches enthusiastically, the lecturer feels close to the student, the lecturer is neatly dressed even though studying online.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Despite the effect of covid-19 pandemic, the lecturer team hopes that in the future students will be able to maximize their participation. Hopefully, this Covid 19 pandemic does not become a barrier to continuing to create a student center learning atmosphere. This effort will be able to optimize the potential of students. This contextual learning method is able to improve students' soft skills in terms of working in groups, learning to communicate well, students are able to motivate the team to show their performance

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was supported by the Institute of Educational Development and Quality Assurance (LP3M) Universitas Andalas. Thank you is addressed to all students who were taking Service Marketing Course.

#### E. REFERENCES

- [1] Institute for Development and Quality Assurance (LP3M), Andalas University, 2014. Practical Guide to Implementing Student Center Learning (SCL). Andalas University Press, Padang
- [2] Institute for Development and Quality Assurance (LP3M) Andalas University, 2015. Guidelines for the Formulation of Graduate Soft skills in the Curriculum and Integration in the Learning Process, Andalas University Press, Padang
- [3] Lovelock, C and Wirzt, J,( 2007), Services Marketing: People, Technology, Strategy, 6th edition, Pearson-Prentice-Hall
- [4] R.Boelens, "The design of blended learning in response to student diversity in higher education: Instructors' views and use of differentiated instruction in blended learning," *Comput. Educ.*, vol. 120, pp. 197–212, 2018.
- [5] Kintu MJ, Zhu C, Kagambe E, Blended learning effectiveness: The relationship between student characteristics, design feature and outcomes *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* (2017) 14:7 DOI 10.1186/s41239-017-0043-4