Jurnal Kependidikan:
Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran
https://e-journal.undikma.ac.id/index.php/jurnalkependidikan/index

Vol. 11, No. 3 : September 2025
E-ISSN: 2442-7667
pp. 1205-1215
Email: jklppm@undikma.ac.id

Development of Economics Textbooks with a Contextual Approach Based on TPACK to Improve Problem-Solving and Creative Thinking Skills

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Abstract: This study aims to develop an Economics Textbook using a Contextual Approach based on TPACK to improve students' problem-solving and creative thinking skills. The research employs a development research method using the ADDIE model, which consists of Analyze, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation phases. The development process involved six expert validators who assessed the textbook's format, language, and content. Validation instruments were used to collect data and obtain feedback for improvement. The validity analysis was conducted using descriptive percentage analysis, calculating the Average Percentage Score (PRS) for each validated aspect. The results show that the Economics Textbook developed with a Contextual TPACK-based approach meets validity criteria. The average percentage scores (PRS) were 81 for format, 87.82 for language, and 83.13 for content, with an overall average of 83.98, all falling into the high category. This textbook is suitable for implementation in economics courses at the higher education level and is expected to significantly enhance students' critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills by promoting more active and meaningful learning experiences.

Article History
Received: 03-07-2025
Revised: 10-08-2025
Accepted: 29-08-2025
Published: 25-09-2025

Key Words:
Economics Textbooks; Contextual Approach; TPACK; Problem Solving; Creative Thingking Skills.

How to Cite: Samakmur, S., Sari, E., & Vebrina, D. (2025). Development of Economics Textbooks with a Contextual Approach Based on TPACK to Improve Problem-Solving and Creative Thinking Skills. *Jurnal Kependidikan, 11*(3), 1205-1215. https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v11i3.17462

https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v11i3.17462

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in improving human life and driving national development (Shavkidinova, Suyunova, & Kholdarova, 2023). A good education is essential for a successful and meaningful life, as it equips individuals with the ability to think critically, work effectively, make sound decisions, and distinguish between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, while fostering humanity (Bano, 2015). In the 21st century, knowledge has become vital, and individuals are required to acquire a range of 21st-century skills to enter the workforce. These skills generally include collaboration, communication, digital literacy, citizenship, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, and productivity (Voogt & Roblin, 2012). They are labeled “21st-century skills” because they are closely aligned with today’s socio-economic developments, which differ significantly from the industrial production model of the past century.

The concept of “21st-century capabilities” refers to a broad set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes considered essential for thriving in a rapidly changing, technology-driven, and interconnected world. These capabilities are increasingly emphasized in education, business, and policy as they are critical for addressing complex global, social, and economic challenges. In this context, improving students’ problem-solving and creative thinking skills is essential for preparing them to face 21st-century demands.

Economics is a discipline that fundamentally examines society in order to understand how humans live and engage in various activities related to the fulfillment of needs. As a

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field of study, economics holds a crucial role in supporting the success of human resource development as well as the advancement of science and technology. The ultimate goal of economics education is to equip learners with the competence to apply economic concepts in everyday life, which serves as the primary target of the economic learning process (Yusuf, 2023).

Various approaches, such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), project-based learning, and the Creative Problem-Solving model, have been shown to be highly effective in developing these skills. For instance, problem-based learning combined with simulation significantly improves students' problem-solving and creative thinking abilities compared to either PBL alone or conventional teaching methods (Simanjuntak, Hutahaean, Marpaung, & Ramadhani, 2021). However, research consistently shows that Indonesian students' creative thinking and problem-solving skills remain relatively low across educational levels. International surveys such as TIMSS and PISA place Indonesia at the lower end of the rankings; only about 2% of students are able to solve problems with moderate-to-high levels of difficulty, and Indonesia ranks 64th out of 65 countries in creative thinking skills (Sari, Pambudi, Gudu, & Tholibon, 2023). This low performance is attributed to several factors, including a lack of exposure to creative problem-solving situations, limited knowledge of problem-solving techniques, and low self-confidence (Aurelia, 2021). Students also tend to follow solution patterns provided by teachers or lecturers without developing new approaches (Khaerunnisa, Fauziyah, & Nurfitriya, 2024).

Further observations at the Institut Pendidikan Tapanuli Selatan, North Sumatra, reveal that students engage in limited cognitive activities during learning. Teaching is still dominated by traditional methods in which students mainly listen and memorize answers rather than engaging in critical thinking or problem-solving. The use of instructional media is absent, students display low confidence, and critical thinking is not emphasized. Lecturers mostly rely on existing textbooks, leading to passive learning and limited student involvement. These conditions highlight the urgent need for a contextual textbook that aligns with the local characteristics of students in Tapanuli Selatan—one that encourages active learning, critical thinking, and collaboration, while also considering the cultural and educational background of the region.

Textbooks, in fact, are a fundamental component of the learning process (Vebrina, D., & Putra, E. 2024).They provide structured content that students must study, examine, and master while also serving as guidelines for learning (Spiel et al., 2013; Salahudin et al., 2018). Textbooks are designed to contain scientific knowledge aligned with curriculum competencies (Hunaepi et al., 2016), and they play a central role in guiding both teachers and students (Putra, E., & Vebrina, D. 2025).. However, current textbooks often appear less engaging, lack innovation, and fail to support the development of students' higher-order thinking skills, including critical and creative thinking.

To address this gap, textbooks must be developed with suitable learning approaches. One effective approach is the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach, which connects subject matter with students' everyday experiences, making learning more meaningful and relevant. CTL emphasizes active participation, inquiry-based activities, collaborative learning, real-world problem-solving, and reflection (Suryawati & Osman, 2017; Hakim & Sari, 2022). Research shows that contextual learning is particularly effective in improving students' problem-solving and creative thinking skills, as it encourages independence and the generation of innovative ideas.

At the same time, the integration of technology into learning design requires the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, which explains the

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dynamic interaction between content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and technological knowledge (TK). These domains overlap to form combined knowledge areas such as TPK (Technological Pedagogical Knowledge), TCK (Technological Content Knowledge), and PCK (Pedagogical Content Knowledge). At its core, TPACK represents the integrative knowledge that enables educators to select, adapt, and integrate technology appropriately with learning content and pedagogy (Warr & Mishra, 2022). In the digital era, the TPACK framework has become central to teacher education and research, particularly as AI and digital tools increasingly shape educational practices.

Research consistently confirms that contextualized textbooks—those linking content with students' everyday lives, cultural contexts, and practical applications—are more effective in improving learning outcomes, motivation, and higher-order thinking skills than traditional, decontextualized textbooks (Sabri, Kholil, Ahmad, & Fah, 2023). For example, textbooks developed with a CTL approach have been shown to significantly enhance students' creative thinking and active participation, even at the elementary school level (Adhaningrum, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop an Economics Textbook using a Contextual Approach based on the TPACK framework to enhance students' problem-solving and creative thinking skills.

Research Method

This study employed the Research and Development (R&D) method, which aims to produce a specific product and evaluate its quality (Sugiyono, 2016). The product developed in this research was an Economics Textbook using a Contextual Approach based on the TPACK framework to enhance students' problem-solving and creative thinking skills. The research was conducted at the Institut Pendidikan Tapanuli Selatan, located on Jl. Stn Moh Arif, Batang Ayumi Jae, North Padangsidimpuan, Padangsidimpuan City, North Sumatra. The location was selected based on the consideration that the institution faces challenges in economics learning, particularly the low level of interactivity in the teaching and learning process. The development procedure followed the ADDIE model (Sugihartini & Yudiana, 2018), which consists of five stages: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. This model was chosen because it aligns with the research objective of producing a contextual, TPACK-based textbook.

1) Analysis Stage
   At this stage, a needs assessment was conducted, particularly focusing on HOTS-based learning requirements. Data were gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and the exploration of student and lecturer perceptions. The findings provided an initial overview of the needs and criteria for developing a Contextual TPACK-based Economics Textbook.
2) Design Stage
   Based on the analysis results, the initial design of the textbook was developed. The structure and configuration of the textbook were systematically outlined to meet the identified needs. The draft design served as the foundation for further product development.
3) Development Stage
   In this stage, the initial draft was refined and evaluated at the theoretical level. Validation was carried out by experts in the fields of content, media, and language to ensure the quality and feasibility of the textbook. Feedback from validators was documented for improvement.
4) Implementation Stage

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The validated textbook was tested with fourth-semester students of the Institut Pendidikan Tapanuli Selatan. The implementation process aimed to assess the practicality and effectiveness of the material. Questionnaires were distributed to both lecturers and students to collect responses regarding the product.

5) Evaluation Stage
Data from expert validation, student responses, and classroom observations were analyzed to determine the textbook's validity, effectiveness, and practicality.

The assessment of the validity of the textbook was carried out by six validators with expertise in the constructivist approach, specifically in the field of economics education at the higher education level, ensuring alignment with the textbook's focus on enhancing critical thinking and collaboration skills. Validation was carried out by experts to assess the product by filling out a validation sheet that was used to assess how the material and language were appropriate, as well as the appropriateness of the media display presented in the product (Kholifah & Kristin, 2021). The assessment was carried out through a validation sheet by providing a checklist ("√") on a 1-5 assessment scale. The scoring is based on 1= very poor, 2= poor, 3= sufficient, 4= good, 5= very good.

Validity analysis used descriptive percentage techniques by calculating the Average Percentage Score (PRS) for each validated component. The criteria were categorized as follows: very good ⇔ $90 \leq PRS \leq 100$, good ⇔ $80 \leq PRS < 90$, sufficient ⇔ $70 \leq PRS < 80$, poor ⇔ $60 \leq PRS < 70$, and very poor ⇔ $0 \leq PRS < 60$ (Sudjana, 2007). A component was considered valid if $PRS \geq 70$ (at least in the sufficient category). In addition to quantitative results, qualitative analysis was conducted on validator recommendations and comments, which were used to revise and improve the textbook (Siregar et al., 2020). The overall purpose of product testing was to determine the extent to which the developed textbook met learning needs and could be feasibly implemented in classroom practice.

Results and Discussion

The results of the analysis are summarized as follows: The textbook developed with a contextual learning approach grounded in the TPACK framework, aimed at strengthening students' problem-solving and creative thinking abilities, was reviewed by six expert validators. The evaluation process focused on three key dimensions: the format, comprising five components; the language, comprising six components; and the content, consisting of eight components.

Table 1. Validator's assessment of format aspects

No	Format Aspect Components	Validator Assessment				PRS	Interpretation	Category
		1	2	3	4			
1	Clarity of Material Division in Textbooks	4	4	4	4	80.0	High	Valid
2	Clear Numbering System	3	4	5	5	85.0	High	Valid
3	Space Arrangement/Layout	4	4	4	4	80.0	High	Valid
4	Appropriate Font Type and Size	4	3	5	5	85.0	High	Valid
5	Suitability of the physical size of the book to the user	4	3	3	3	65.0	Low	Invalid
Average value		3.80	3.60	4.20	4.20	79.0	Currently	Valid

Based on the validators' assessment of the format components, the results fell into the categories of fair, good, and very good. On average, the overall evaluation of the textbook format was classified as good. Furthermore, the analysis of the Average Percentage Score

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(PRS) revealed that out of the five validated components, four were considered valid: clarity in the division of learning materials, consistency in layout and spacing, numbering system, and the type and size of fonts. However, one component—namely the suitability of the textbook's physical size—was deemed invalid. This was primarily due to inappropriate book dimensions.

The predominant suggestion provided by the validators was the need to adjust the book size so that it would not be too small or too large. These recommendations were taken into account to revise and improve the format aspect of the textbook. In addition, validation was also conducted on the language aspect of the textbook. The evaluation results indicated that all components under this aspect met the validity criteria.

Table 2. Validator's Assessment of Language Aspects

No	Format Aspect Components	Validator Assessment				PRS	Interpretation	Category
		1	2	3	4			
1	Grammar Corrections in Textbooks	4	4	4	4	80.0	High	Valid
2	Simplicity of Sentence Structure	4	5	4	5	90.0	Very High	Valid
3	Encourage learning of critical thinking and collaboration skills	4	4	4	4	80.0	High	Valid
4	Compliance with instructions or directions	4	3	4	5	90.0	Very High	Valid
5	Suitability of fiveswith learning approaches	5	5	5	4	95.0	Very High	Valid
6	Question sentences do not contain double meanings	4	3	3	5	75.0	Currently	Valid
Average value		4.16	4.00	4.00	4.50	85.0	High	Valid

Based on Table 2, the highest validity score is found in the component *"the appropriateness of sentences with the learning approach,"* which falls into the *very high* interpretation category. This is because the sentences in the textbook are composed in a simple, concise manner and align with the learning approach used. Meanwhile, the component that received the lowest score is *"questions do not contain double meanings,"* due to the fact that some of the questions contain ambiguous or multiple interpretations.

The validators' assessment of the language aspect components shows a category ranging from *good* to *very good*. Judging from the average score, the overall assessment by the validators falls into the *good* category. Furthermore, based on the PRS score analysis, all six validated components are classified as *valid*. Likewise, the average PRS score indicates that the validation of the textbook from a language aspect meets the criteria for *validity*. The main suggestion given by the validators regarding the language aspect is the need to clarify instructions or guidelines in the textbook to avoid misinterpretation. In addition, validation was also carried out on the textbook by examining the content aspect.

Table 3. Validator's assessment of content aspects

No	**Format Aspect Components**	**Validator Assessment**				**PRS**	**Interpretation**	**Category**
		1	2	3	4			
1	Completeness of Components in Textbooks	5	4	4	4	85	High	Valid
2	Truth of material/content	3	4	4	4	75	Currently	Valid
3	Compliance with TP, Indicators, KI and KD	4	4	4	3	75	Currently	Valid
4	Grouping into logical parts	4	3	4	4	75	Currently	Valid

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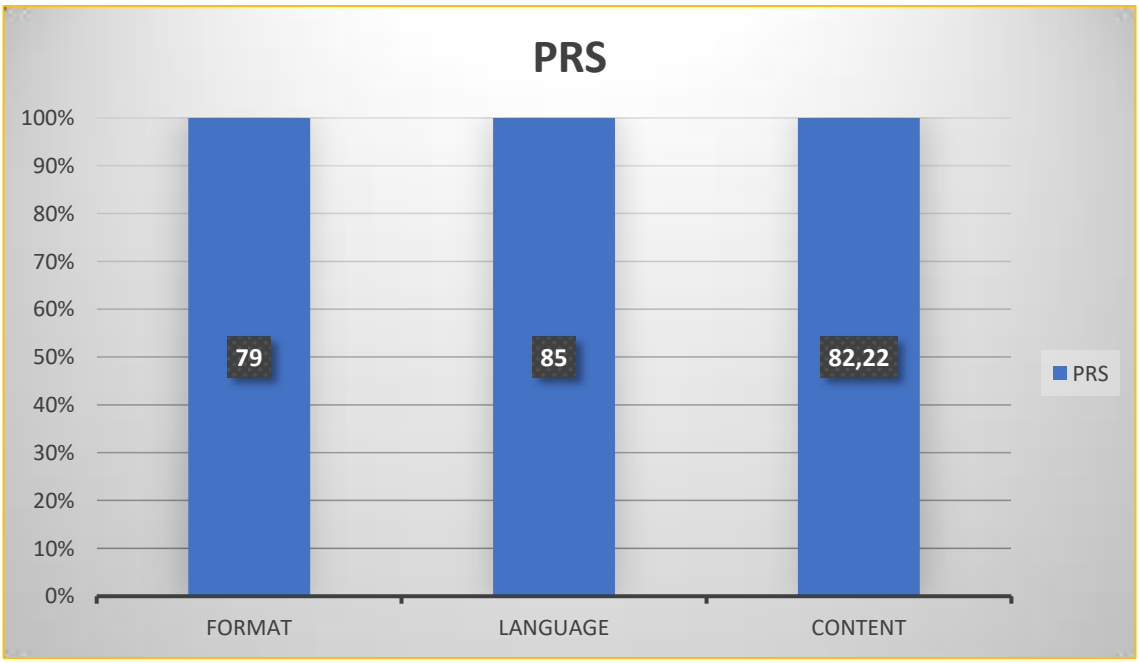
5	Conformity with the applicable curriculum	3	3	4	3	65	Low	Invalid
6	conformity with the Contextual Approach Based on TPACK	5	5	5	4	95	Very high	Valid
7	Stimulate students Problem Solving and Creative skills	5	5	4	5	95	Very high	Valid
8	Suitability of the time allocation used	5	4	4	4	85	High	Valid
9	Conformity of Material Sequence	5	4	4	5	90	Very high	Valid
Average value		4.33	4.00	4.11	4.00	82.22	High	Valid

Based on the validator's assessment of the content aspect, the results showed varying categories ranging from low, sufficient, good, to very good. Overall, when viewed from the average score, the textbook was generally rated as good. Furthermore, the PRS analysis revealed that out of 9 validated components, 8 were categorized as valid, while 1 component was deemed invalid. The component considered invalid was the suitability with the current curriculum. This occurred because the textbook was developed by referring to the independent curriculum, whereas the curriculum currently in effect is the 2023 curriculum. The use of the independent curriculum in preparing teaching materials was based on the need to adjust to the curriculum implemented in schools, while also maintaining the sequence and hierarchy of subject matter for upper-level students at the research site.

The validator's suggestions and comments emphasized that the development of teaching materials should align with the applicable curriculum and be logically structured as well as integrated. These recommendations were taken into account as inputs for revising the textbook so that it would be more appropriate for further use. In terms of the validation achievements, the highest score was obtained for the language aspect, followed by the content aspect, and then the format aspect. The PRS values resulting from the validation across these aspects are presented in Figure 1 below.



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Discussion

The product validation, covering the aspects of format, language, and content, indicates that the textbook falls into the valid category. The average Percentage Rating Score (PRS) obtained from the validation process was 82.07, which surpasses the predetermined validity criterion of PRS ≥ 70. This statistical evidence strongly supports that the developed textbook is valid and reliable in terms of its format, linguistic quality, and content accuracy. These findings are in harmony with previous research, such as Bukit et al. (2022), who reported that the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)-based Civic Education module designed for fifth-grade elementary students was categorized as highly feasible, achieving an average validation score of 93.75%. Similarly, the research by Jazirah and Ibrahim (2023) on student worksheets employing a contextual approach to foster critical thinking skills also yielded a valid product, with media and language experts awarding scores of 0.98 and 0.97 respectively based on Aiken's V index. In addition, Haspen et al. (2021) conducted a study on the development of a guided inquiry-based e-module integrated with ethnoscience, concluding that the product was valid and feasible for enhancing creative thinking skills in students. These supporting studies affirm the credibility and practical relevance of using contextual and constructivist approaches in developing educational materials.

The initial phase of the product development, known as the analysis stage, began with a thorough needs assessment. This process revealed a pressing demand for textbooks developed through a contextual learning approach to better cultivate students' problem-solving abilities and creative thinking skills within higher education Economics courses. The content focus chosen was Microeconomics, which aligns closely with the current Independent Curriculum, locally known as Kurikulum Merdeka. The Front-End Analysis further emphasized the selection of the constructivist approach as the pedagogical foundation of the textbook development. This approach aims to nurture essential skills such as critical thinking and collaboration, which are regarded as core competencies to be developed in students through active, student-centered learning facilitated by the textbook.

Following the needs analysis, the project advanced to the design stage, which is critical for establishing a clear and detailed blueprint for the textbook. During this stage, the textbook was carefully structured by adopting the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach as its main pedagogical framework. This decision was made based on the approach's strength in linking academic content to real-world scenarios, thereby encouraging students to engage in higher-order thinking processes. Consequently, the textbook was designed not only to present economic theories and concepts but also to incorporate varied learning activities that stimulate critical and creative thinking. These activities aim to empower students to independently analyze problems and construct viable solutions. The emphasis on Microeconomics ensures that the content is directly relevant to the academic needs of university students majoring in Economics.

At the development stage, the quality and feasibility of the textbook were evaluated through a rigorous validation process involving six subject matter experts. These validators assessed three main components: format, language, and content, using detailed checklists and scoring rubrics. The data collected showed that the average PRS scores met or exceeded the thresholds for validity. In addition to numerical scores, validators offered valuable qualitative feedback, including constructive criticism and recommendations aimed at improving the textbook's presentation, language precision, and comprehensiveness of material. These insights were instrumental in revising the draft and enhancing the final product's overall quality.

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The finalized textbook, validated and refined based on expert feedback, is therefore deemed suitable for implementation in higher education settings. It transcends the conventional delivery of Microeconomics material by integrating multiple contextual learning elements, such as real-life case studies, practical applications, and interactive activities designed to encourage student exploration, collaborative discussions, and reflective thinking. These features provide students with abundant opportunities to practice and hone their creative thinking capabilities, alongside improving their problem-solving skills within an economics framework. Hence, the textbook serves not only as a source of academic knowledge but also as a dynamic pedagogical tool that aligns with the demands of 21st-century education, preparing students for both academic challenges and future professional environments.

From the format perspective, specific adjustments were necessary to optimize the textbook's visual appeal and readability. For example, changes in font style and size were implemented, along with the use of boldface type for titles and section headings to enhance clarity and attract reader attention. Furthermore, consistent application of uppercase and lowercase letters was used to improve legibility and reduce potential misinterpretation or confusion. Such careful attention to formatting details is vital because inconsistencies in notation and typographic conventions have been identified in previous instructional materials as contributing to cognitive and conceptual difficulties among learners (Lee, 2013).

In terms of language, the textbook excels by employing correct grammar, constructing simple yet meaningful sentences, and communicating ideas clearly and effectively. The language throughout the textbook remains consistent and adheres strictly to the rules of proper Indonesian grammar, as emphasized by Afrahamiryano and Ariani (2017). Moreover, the contextual explanations are tailored to align with students' prior knowledge and their specific learning environments, enhancing comprehension and accessibility. This corresponds with the findings of Nursyahrifa et al. (2019), who state that an effective textbook should match the cognitive developmental stages of its learners to facilitate meaningful engagement with the material.

Beyond linguistic clarity, the textbook is designed to motivate students by fostering the development of critical thinking and collaboration skills. Clear instructions and usage guidelines are provided to enable students to effectively navigate through the learning materials. The evaluation of language includes not only grammatical correctness but also other important factors such as readability, motivational appeal, simplicity, and compliance with national language standards (Sultan et al., 2023). The inclusion of attractive visuals, transparent and well-structured presentation of information, and the use of accessible and engaging language all contribute to the effectiveness of the textbook as a learning resource. These characteristics are consistent with the criteria of effective learning materials outlined by Sabri et al. (2023), ensuring the textbook is not merely an information repository but a meaningful instructional aid.

Content-wise, the textbook organizes material systematically and with clear structure, following a contextual approach intended to strengthen students' problem-solving and creative thinking skills. The material is divided into subchapters covering topics such as responsibility, obligations, rights, and deliberation. In line with the applied approach, the content is not limited to theoretical study but also contextualized and applied to various life domains, including family, educational institutions, communities, and national governance.

The textbook's content structure aligns well with intended learning objectives and outcomes. It is adjusted to meet the demands of the higher education curriculum and accounts for the time allocation typical for Economics courses. Based on validation results, the content

meets criteria for alignment with learning goals, accuracy, learning support, and the inclusion of up-to-date information (Irhasyuarna & Hafizah, 2022).

By presenting material through relevant real-life contexts, the textbook is expected to enhance students' motivation to learn, which is a critical factor in improving problem-solving and creative thinking skills. A textbook that aligns with learning objectives, contains accurate and relevant material, and successfully motivates learners can be categorized as a valid and feasible product for teaching and learning activities (Afrahamiryano & Ariani, 2017).

This textbook explicitly supports the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka by embodying the curriculum's core principles, such as student-centered learning, curricular flexibility, and a focus on developing critical and creative competencies. The use of a contextual approach corresponds to the curriculum's emphasis on authentic learning experiences and character building. Learning activities embedded within the textbook encourage students to actively engage in their learning processes, explore real-world problems, and develop higher-order thinking skills, which are central goals of Kurikulum Merdeka. Furthermore, the flexibility inherent in the textbook design allows educators to adapt materials to suit diverse learning contexts and individual student needs, reflecting the spirit of autonomy promoted by the curriculum. Thus, this textbook not only serves academic purposes but also functions as a practical tool for implementing Kurikulum Merdeka effectively in higher education settings.

Beyond demonstrating validity in content and design, the textbook is intentionally developed to foster active student engagement throughout the learning journey. This is achieved through the integration of various pedagogical strategies embedded within the book, including case studies that relate theoretical concepts to real-life scenarios, group discussions that facilitate peer learning, problem-based projects encouraging collaborative problem-solving, and reflective exercises promoting metacognitive awareness. Each chapter contains these interactive components, enabling students to participate actively rather than passively absorbing information.

The CTL approach used in the textbook promotes interaction not only between students and learning content but also among students themselves, thereby enhancing social learning and cooperative skills. These activities help increase students' motivation and commitment to their learning process by making the material relevant and personally meaningful. Additionally, the textbook encourages exploration and inquiry, allowing students to take ownership of their learning experiences. By fostering such an engaging and collaborative learning environment, the textbook supports the development of 21st-century skills that are highly valued in both academic and professional realms, including communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity. Ultimately, this active engagement leads to deeper understanding and retention of knowledge, better preparing students for challenges beyond the classroom.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the textbook using a contextual learning approach based on TPACK to enhance students' problem-solving abilities and creative thinking skills meets the validity criteria with an average total PRS validation score of 82.07, which falls into the high category. This indicates that the research product in the form of an economics textbook with a contextual approach based on TPACK, designed to develop students' problem-solving abilities and creative thinking skills, is declared valid and feasible to be implemented in economics learning at the university level.

Recommendation

The recommendation proposed based on the findings of this study is that lecturers are encouraged to consistently apply the TPACK method to improve students' problem-solving abilities and creative thinking skills. Students are expected to actively participate and collaborate in every stage of the learning process to strengthen their understanding of economics. Further research could focus on developing evaluation instruments, applying this approach to other subjects, and testing digital-based textbooks so that contextual learning becomes more flexible and effective.

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