

Teacher's emphatic communication to improve learning motivation of special needs students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze how the role of teachers in increasing their interest in learning, especially in relation to empathy communication patterns that are run. The research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative, with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observation, and literacy studies. The Indonesian government has guaranteed equal rights to the fulfillment of education for all Indonesian citizens including children with special needs. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, until 2017 the number of children with special needs in Indonesia reaches 1.6 million. From this data, it is seen the need for maximum efforts to achieve the goals of inclusive education and the fulfillment of the right to education for children with special needs in Indonesia. In fact, on the ground it appears that the practice of inclusive education for several years is inseparable from various obstacles and problems. The results of this study indicate that empathy communication is effective in increasing the learning interest of students with special needs. The teachers use various strategies in the learning process to increase their interest in learning.

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1. Introduction

Education development is the main focus that has an important role in helping the development of Indonesian society life both from the social, economic, political, and cultural [1]. Therefore, efforts to fulfill the educational needs that are feasible for all Indonesian citizens are still being promoted by the government. This is in line with the juridical foundation of the State of Indonesia namely Constitution 1945 Article 31 paragraph (1) stating that "Every citizen is entitled to receive education" and Constitution no. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights Article 12 stating that "Every person shall have the right to protection for his personal development, to obtain education, to educate himself, and to improve his quality of life in order to become a human being who is faithful, pious, responsible, noble, happy and prosperous in accordance with human rights".

In addition, in Constitution no. 39 of 1999 Article 60 also affirms that "Every child shall have the right to receive education and instruction in the framework of his personal development in accordance with his interests, talents and intelligence level" [2]. The educational progress being pursued by the government is still ongoing so that decent education can be enjoyed by all Indonesians, both rich and poor, living in urban as well as remote areas, as well as for normal and children with special needs [3].

Over the last decade, inclusion has become a world trend in special education. In response to that trend, the Indonesian government has adopted a progressive policy to implement inclusive education. The aim of this research is to describe the implementation process by focusing on the institutional management, student admission/identification/assessment, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and external supports [4].

Therefore, the renewal of the education system in Indonesia should also be done specially to embrace all Indonesian citizens who have a specificity by applying an inclusive education system [5]. In line with the increasing number of children with special needs in Indonesia, the government began to expand the application of inclusive education throughout Indonesia [6]. In accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia number 70 of 2009: on inclusive education for learners who have abnormalities and have the potential of intelligence and / or special talent, the government guarantees the right of fulfillment of education for all citizens of Indonesia is no exception for children with special needs. Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, until 2017 the number of children with special needs in Indonesia reached 1.6 million people [7]. This shows that there should be maximum effort to achieve the goal of inclusive education and be able to optimally fulfill the right of education for children with special needs in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, as elsewhere in Asia, education will inevitably play a key role in the national development experience as the twenty-first century unfolds. Not much international attention is paid to how the education sector is faring in Indonesia, but that is not because nothing is happening. The past decade has seen major changes in the structure of the education system and in the schooling trajectories of Indonesian children and adolescents. The administration of primary and secondary education has been decentralized to the regions. A new paradigm of school-based management has been introduced. Public spending on education has finally reached one-fifth of total government spending, as required by law. But although enrolment rates at all levels continue to increase, the quality of education remains low and has not improved, and the tertiary sector continues to experience problems of autonomy and unsatisfactory performance [8].

However, the reality in the field shows that the practice of inclusive education for several years is inseparable from various obstacles and problems. Some of the problems encountered stems from the implementation of inclusion schools that are minimal preparation so that all elements of the school are still not able to maximize the facilitation of education for children with special needs in inclusive schools.

2. Theoretical Framework

Based on research conducted by [9], teachers in inclusion schools who are subject to research stated that they showed willingness to accept students with special needs so as to support the implementation of inclusive education [10]. Nevertheless, there are still some things to be concern so that the implementation of inclusive education is going well. Some of the findings shows all of the things related to the preparation of the infrastructure, the understanding of the children with special needs, the appropriate differentiation curriculum to be applied, the inclusion class management, the appropriate attitude and teaching methods for the children with special needs. Elisa & Wrastari also found a new understanding of attitudes and some of the supporting factors that need to be present in teachers so they can be ready for implementing inclusive education [11]. There are two emerging attitudes of accepting and rejecting inclusive education, while factors of concern are external factors such as facilities and the existence of a strong support system and internal factors such as knowledge, experience, to empathy.

Strong readiness related to supporting facilities for the implementation of children-friendly education with special needs as well as teacher readiness is an important factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education [12]. Supporting facilities for the implementation of education is still continue to be done with government assistance, while the readiness of teachers still need to be the focus of attention. Teachers are the closest element of school to the students so that the teacher's readiness will also affect the output produced by the students. Several studies have been undertaken to find appropriate solutions to assist teacher preparedness in facing inclusive education. But it still focuses on pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical issues in dealing with children with special needs during the implementation of inclusive education. Whereas effective and

empathetic communication skills are also needed to support success in practicing teachers' pedagogical understanding and ability in teaching children with special needs.

Richmond, Wrench, & Gorham writes in the book "Communication, Affect, & Learning in the Classroom" that teaching is about effective and affective communication processes built with students in the classroom [13]. Teaching is not only focused on learning materials but also needs to be supported by the process of delivering learning materials effectively [14]. Teachers have to become accustomed to working alongside these additional members of staff, each of whom has a very specific job description [15].

An effective communication process will have a positive impact on the achievement of learning objectives in the classroom. Thus, effective teachers are effective communicators as well [13]. Based on the study, by Bakić-Tomić, Dvorski, & Kirinić it is also known that the most common problem in schools is that teachers do not feel or associate work-related fatigue with classroom communication (they are unaware of the lack of communication knowledge and adequate communication skills) [16]. Therefore, teachers still need to increase awareness about communication skills especially communication that involves empathy as a determinant of success in teacher-student relationships at school [17].

Seeing the importance of effective and affective communication process between teacher and student, it is necessary to know the most appropriate communication pattern to be able to improve the with students with special needs learning motivation [18]. Therefore, this study was conducted to find the teachers' communication pattern to be able to improve the with students with special needs learning motivation

3. Method

This research method is descriptive qualitative. This research was conducted by analyzing the communication patterns of empathy teachers in increasing the learning interest of students with special needs. In this study, researchers conducted data collection through in-depth interviews, observations, and literacy studies of the phenomena of the learning processes of students with special needs and how teachers use their communication patterns to be able to increase learning motivation [19].

4. Results and Discussion

The learning process in the classroom cannot be separated from the role of the teacher as a communicator. Therefore, the success of students in following the learning process is strongly influenced by the teacher's communication skills to students. In line with the development of inclusive education in Indonesia, teachers are also required to be able to maximize its role as an effective communicator for all students especially for students with special needs.

Anderson defines communication as a dynamic process whereby the individual, consciously or unconsciously influences the cognition of others through the material or agency used in a symbolic way. Communication undertaken by teachers in the learning process is certainly not only a process of conveying the material to be understood by the students but also must touch affective sphere so as to improve student learning motivation in the classroom [20].

There is one model of teacher communication in performing its role as a learning communicator, that is Kibler's instruction model, like in figure 1. According to this model, learning is seen as a behavioral change that can be nurtured by teacher communication that reinforces desired behavior, punishes undesirable behaviors, provides examples for students to imitate, reinforces behaviors that approach objective behavior so that students gradually approach goals, or actively intervene as long as students behave to provide modification suggestions [13].

Furthermore, it is explained that communication-oriented instruction is based on teachers developing a systematic process for assessing the cognitive, affective, and baseline levels of student behavior, arranging the activities that build the assessment, and evaluating learning outcomes during and after instruction [21]. If learning does not occur, teacher-oriented communication seeks to change the communication process. Thus, the success of learning is strongly influenced by the communication process undertaken by the teacher [22].

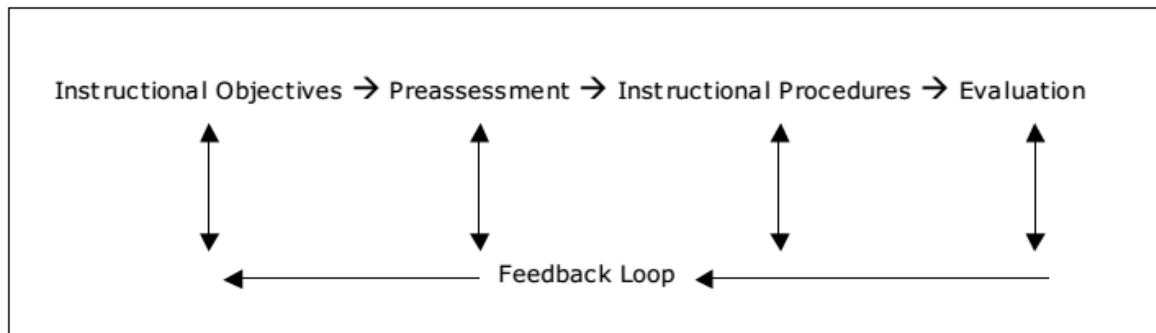


Fig. 1. Kibler's instruction model

The Vorkapić & Ružić study showed about the importance of empathy for school teachers. High empathy in teachers working with preschoolers is important because they have a positive influence on teacher and child relationships and they also encourage empathy development in children [23]. Based on the research that has been done, the development suggestions for the education of prospective teachers also need to consider about the ability of empathy during the learning process. Therefore, teachers as communicators also need to implement communication that is balanced by the ability of empathy (called empathic communication) during classroom learning.

According to Hutchison said empathy occurs when you experience emotional reactions similar to those experienced by others. Empathy can be distinguished from sympathy, that is compassion or recognition that a person may feel uncomfortable [24]. For example, if someone tells you about a personal tragedy and you imagine how bad his feelings are, this is sympathy. Conversely, if you imagine yourself in the same situation, you experience empathy. Based on the research Arghod, Arghode, Liew, empathy skills performed by teachers play an important role in student learning [25]. In addition, Warren has also reviewed the theory that empathy can be used to improve teachers' teaching effectiveness in urban and multicultural settings. Thus, communication accompanied by the ability of empathy to students can help teachers to optimize its role as an educator as well as communicator during the learning process [26].

Empathic communication is a communication process that focuses on the ability of individuals to use active listening [24]. The listening process includes not only the process of receiving and understanding information, but responding to that information as well. Responses come in the form of verbal and nonverbal behaviors, and often lack of skills in responding can create a negative communication climate. If you want to send a specific response message such as attention and interest, this can be done by providing evidence that we are listening actively (active listening) [27]. Active listening is the conscious process of responding to the conversation mentally, verbally, and nonverbally to the message conveyed by the speaker [28]. There are some example of active listening behaviors include nods, sayings like "mmhm" and eye contact. During active listening, listeners do not need to rush to advise the speaker since this will worsen the climate formed in the communication process [29]. Suggestions can frustrate the speaker for showing a little confidence that he can solve his own problems. Sometimes, advising is the right response, but consider the following options to show active listening behavior:

Paraphrase the speaker's message by checking the accuracy of your understanding. Paraphrase should include a summary of the content and relational components of other people's messages, checking to see if you understand what they say and how they feel. Paraphrasing is different from parroting, which uses other words without showing any meaning: (1) analyze problems with the other person, trying to get to the bottom of the problem by considering many perspectives; (2) get more information. Ask another question so you can understand him completely; (3) show support by expressing empathy and confirming the feelings of others. Often people just want to know that you understand their feelings; (4) before advising, ask the person if he or she is looking for suggestions.

Based on the studies that have been done in 10 inclusive schools in Yogyakarta, the application of empathic communication is good enough. Teachers are able to show active listening to their students with special needs who complain about their learning difficulties. Some of the responses that teachers often give to students are teachers willing to ask neutral questions to understand the real condition of the student, the teacher is able to provide support by expressing the emotional reflection felt by the student, and the teacher is able to refrain from giving haste when giving advice

special needs who experience problems in learning. In addition, teachers are also able to perform its role as a communicator effectively by applying the Kibler's instruction model.

The instructional process based on the instructional model begins with setting instruction or learning goals to be achieved together between teachers and students [30]. Then after determining this instructional objective, the teacher proceeds to assess the knowledge and behavioral abilities that exist within the student to determine the proper learning activities. Subsequently, the instructional procedure is implemented through the selection of available materials, the development of new materials, and the development of a sequential plan that seems to be the most efficient way to achieve the desired objectives. Feedback is also given to inform students about what they do along the instructions. At the end of the learning is always done to evaluate whether the learning objectives have been achieved. If the learning objectives have not been achieved, then the teacher needs to re-analyze what is not appropriate and improve the communication process in the learning.

5. Conclusion

Empathic communication by the teacher is effective enough to improve the learning motivation of students with special needs. Our results show that teachers have implemented active listening methods, such as: understanding when there are students who complaining about their learning difficulties, as well as providing a positive response to various problems faced by students. As a communicator in the learning process, teachers apply the Kibler's instruction model. This means that the learning process has been done systematically and measured well. Teachers constantly set goals for instruction, give instruction with two-way communication patterns to get feedback.

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