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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COOPERATIVE LEARNING MODEL FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS

Rusdin Djibu*

This study addresses the issue of low social intelligence among students in community learning centers in the city of Gorontalo, Indonesia. This low level of social intelligence is a result of an ineffective conventional teaching approach. Efforts have been made to overcome this problem by developing innovative learning models. This study aimed to develop a model of cooperative learning that could help to improve learners' social skills, based on cooperative learning theory and the theory of social intelligence. The method used in the study was research and development. The study revealed that there has not been an appropriate learning model to improve the social skills of students in the program, but that the learning process is carried out as a mere transfer of knowledge. Additionally, it was found that a cooperative learning model can enhance the social intelligence of the learners and the cooperative learning model implemented as a trial model was effective in improving students' social intelligence. This was indicated by an increase in the social intelligence of the students during and after the learning process.

Keywords: community learning center, equivalency education, social intelligence, social learning, social skills

INTRODUCTION

Educators should develop conscious awareness of the elements of mastery so as to help students learn more effectively (Mayer, 2010). To learn more effectively is to implement the four *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO, 2006) principles of learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. These principles are basically goal oriented. Goal-directed practice coupled with targeted feedback enhances the quality of students' learning (Mayer et al., 2010). Such learning can help to prepare the learners for the challenges ahead as a nation, as communities, and as individuals. In the process of preparing for the future, we understand the interdependence of our environment, our values, our economy, our patterns, our family structures, our traditional concepts of education, and our ways of life (Boyle, 1981).

This means that education must transmit, efficiently and on a massive scale, an increasing amount of constantly evolving knowledge and know how to adapt it to a knowledge-driven civilization, because this forms the basis of the skills of the future. At the same time, education must find and mark the reference points that will make it possible for people not to be overwhelmed by the flows of information (much of it ephemeral) that are invading the public and private domains. Such reference points would also keep in view the development of individuals and communities as its goal (Delors et al., 1996).

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4 Several studies have examined the effects of cooperative learning methods on student learning. Humphreys, Johnson, and Johnson (1982) compared cooperative, competitive, and individualistic strategies in science classes and found that students who were taught by cooperative methods learned and retained significantly more information than students taught by the other two methods (Rosini and Flowers, 1997).

4 The main goal of this study is to develop a cooperative learning model that can help to improve learners' social skills. Cooperative learning models prioritize small-group learning and sharing. A small group is defined as any number of persons interacting in a single face-to-face meeting or series of meetings. Each member is able to gain some impression or perception of the other members that is distinct enough so that they can give some reaction to the others as individual people if ever questioned (Hare, 1976). Every participant has different abilities, which can be categorized as high, medium, or low. The cooperative learning model gives priority to cooperation in problem solving. According to Vygotsky (1978) students are capable of performing at higher intellectual levels in collaborative situations rather than individually. Group diversity in terms of knowledge and experience contributes positively to the learning process. Bruner (1977) contends that cooperative learning methods improve problem-solving strategies because the students are confronted with different interpretations of the given situation. The peer support system makes it possible for the learner to internalize both external knowledge and critical thinking skills and to convert them into tools for intellectual functioning (Gokhale, 1995). This implies that learning in a group is a fundamental human requirement that helps us respond to one another.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Technically, a community-learning center is meant to be run and maintained by institutions or officials from the grass-roots community. Its success and prosperity are based on the efforts of these people. Community learning centers face internal and external problems (Balitbang Report, 2012). Internal problems include learners' lack of motivation and tutors not working to their full potential to comply with the demands of learners or society. The main external challenge is the lack of an established relationship between community learning centers and other community groups. This implies that there is no relationship between the curriculum or materials presented to the learners and real-life situations. This negatively affects the social skills of the learners; they are not able to develop the social skills they need to live together in their localities.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aimed "to develop a model of cooperative learning to improve social skills of the equivalent education," by maximizing the involvement of learners in

planning, organizing⁴, implementing, coaching, assessment, and development of learning activities. The purpose of the study is to develop a cooperative learning model for the improvement of social intelligence or social skills of the learners in the Packet B equivalency education program run by community learning centers in the city of Gorontalo, Indonesia. The study is expected to contribute to the development of nonformal education specifically from the perspective of equivalency education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUAL BASE

Cooperative learning

Learning involves acquiring and modifying knowledge, skills, strategies, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Schunk, 2012). In cooperative learning, priority is given to cooperation in problem solving. Unfortunately, when not properly³ structured, cooperative groups can lead to poorer learning than that achieved in whole-class instruction. In cooperative learning, the objective is to develop, in students, the ability to work collaboratively. The task should be one that is too extensive for a single student to complete in a timely fashion, but also should lend itself well to a group, such as by having components that can be completed by individual students who then merge their work into a final product (Schunk, 2012). Cooperative learning is of value for all students including those who have been identified as at risk, bilingual, gifted, and normal. It encourages mutual respect and learning among students with varying talents and abilities, languages, and racial and ethnic backgrounds (Cohen, Brody, and Sapon-Shaven, 2004). Suzana (2011) reported that cooperative learning is effective in reducing prejudice among students and in meeting the academic and social needs of students at risk for educational failure (Cohen, Brody, and Sapon-Shaven, 2004). Besides the cooperative learning concept, this research also applied a social intelligence concept.

Community learning centers

Since the inception of equivalency education programs in the Asia-Pacific region, governments have encouraged citizens who can not afford formal education to access learning through centers such as public libraries, museums, public parks, science and technology parks, and national parks (Chantavanich, 2006; Leowarin, 2010). In Indonesia, community learning centers (CLCs) have become the best equivalency education option. CLCs are set up and organized by the community and for the community (Masaeng, 2006; Leowarin, 2010). In other words, a CLC as a local institution outside the formal education system should be set up and managed by local people based on their various learning needs which embrace the localized content of a given society (Wamaungo, 2013). The purpose of a CLC is

to promote human development by providing lifelong learning opportunities to all people in the local community (UNESCO Bangkok, 2006; Wamaung, 2013).

Equivalency education

To meet the goal of education for all, it is necessary to provide education not only through schools, but also through nonformal education programs for children, youth, and adults who have not completed their basic education. Equivalency programs are alternative education programs equivalent to the formal system not only in terms of curriculum and certification but also in regard to policy support mechanisms, mode of delivery, staff training, and support activities such as monitoring, evaluation, and assessment of learning. To achieve the goal of education for all and promote lifelong learning, there is a need to strengthen formal and nonformal education through the development of equivalency programs for out-of-school children, youth, and adults. These programs will enable them to access basic education and continuing education in order to improve their level of learning (UNESCO Bangkok, 2006). Since 1970, Indonesia has promoted equivalency education as part of the nonformal education system (UNESCO Bangkok, 2006). Participants include both school-age children who are limited and have no access to formal education and adults who need education at primary and secondary levels (UNESCO Bangkok, 2006).

Research method

The development of a cooperative learning model for social intelligence enhancement in CLCs was accomplished using a research and development study design. The steps followed were those proposed by Borg, Gall and Gall (2003). Step 1 involved the definition of goals for the instructional program, which also included a needs assessment. Steps 2 and 3 occurred simultaneously: during step 2, an instructional analysis was undertaken to identify specific skills, procedures, and learning tasks, and for step 3, learners' skills and attitudes were identified. During step 4, needs and goals of instruction were translated into specific performance objectives. In step 5, assessment instruments were established or developed. In step 6, a cooperative learning model was developed. Step 7 involved the trial and validation of the cooperative learning model. Finally, during steps 8, 9, and 10, the implementation model was established. This model has been recommended for implementation in the equivalency education program, specifically Packet B.

Data were collected through interviews, observations, questionnaires, study of documents, and focus group discussions. Interviews and observations were used to obtain information on the condition of cooperative learning in the Packet B program in Gorontalo. Document review and focus group discussions were used to collect data relevant to the development of a cooperative learning model for the

program. The research was based on the hypothesis that social intelligence can enhance learners' social skills in the CLCs in Gorontalo.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Teaching and learning in the program of Packet B in the CLCs of Gorontalo districts has been based on the existing national government standards. In this study, a cooperative learning model was developed based on the hypothetical model of cooperative learning as explained below.

PLANNING

The planning stages include identifying and prioritizing needs and identifying a source of learning. Learners' needs were first identified through interviews with the head of the nonformal education department in Gorontalo and the heads of CLCs. Open interviews were used to obtain an overview of the needs of learners and tutors. Next, each tutor used a structured identification sheet to identify learners' needs related to competency development of tutors. Prioritizing consisted of determining the need for learning, the basis for setting learning objectives, subject matter, and strategy or approach to learning, as well as the formulation of evaluation tools. Identification of the source of learning consisted of identifying tutors who could assist learners to develop good social skills.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MODEL

The implementation phase involves conditioning of professional interaction but maintaining a learning approach of transmission (transfer), transaction, and collaboration. In an effort to improve learners' social skills in the Packet B program, the cooperative learning model for improvement of social skills among learners can be carried out in several phases: preparation, implementation, and evaluation, as well as a trial phase to test the effectiveness of the model.

At the implementation phase, observations were made during the learning process and on an ongoing basis, invent that happened involved tutor including motivation and creativity of the learners. To create links between components and the effectiveness of the program, criteria of reflection were established: (1) preparation of the lesson plan, (2) implementation and careful observation of learning in small groups of peers, (3) analysis and discussion of the learning that took place, and (4) planning the next stage of learning. These measures aimed to further improve the understanding of learners in real-life situations.

EVALUATION

The evaluation was conducted based on criteria and instruments developed to assess the effectiveness of learning. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the model was through observation of behavior related to social intelligence of the learners in the

Gorontalo CLCs involved in the study. Social intelligence entails situational awareness, presence, authenticity, clarity, and empathy. Evaluation of the impact of the implemented model (learning outcomes) was performed through reflective activities to determine the ability of the learners. Careful observation and discussion were carried out to provide input on the improvement of learners' social intelligence.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Indicators of an increase in the social intelligence of the learners in the Packet B program were as follows: (1) improvement in situational awareness of at least 75%; (2) improvement in attendance of at least 75% in every learning session, which showed an improvement in the desire to learn; (3) being authentic during learning; (4) increased clarity or understanding of content; and (5) empathy increased by at least 75%.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MODEL

The effectiveness of the model was tested through pre-test and post-test trials referred to as phase I and phase II. In the process, there was an observation of the social behavior of the learners.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that in the previous, learners could not apply the concepts learned during their education to real-life situations because of the limited skills they obtained in the conventional Packet B program. Tutors have not yet fully understood learners' education needs. In addition, tutors were dominant in every learning process and were unfamiliar with designing lesson plans, using different media, and evaluating learning. The learning process consists mostly of instructional rather than personal approaches, and more emphasis is placed on the tutors' prepared materials and personal delivery methods than their professional methods.

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