Meaning of Developing Student Centered Classroom Environment

Harjali
Jurusan Tarbiyah, Institute Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Ponorogo, Indonesia
Email: lucky_09@yahoo.co.id

Abstract
Classroom learning environment has been widely researched topics in elementary and secondary education. This study aimed to investigate teachers' experience in building classroom learning environment. This research involved a qualitative phenomenological design that employed a purposeful sample of teachers at Junior High School Classrooms in Ponorogo. Data were collected via in depth interviews and participant observations. In analyzing the data, the writer evaluated the interview transcriptions and the observation field notes which were organized into relevant themes. Most of the participants suggest that there were some meanings gotten from building students center classrooms learning environment based on constructivism paradigm. Classroom learning environment is built psychologically and socio-culturally context. Thus students can manage, interact, and achieve their learning objectives, facilitated by learning activities based on selected materials, strategies, and media.

Keywords: *learning environment, classrooms*

1. Introduction

The new paradigm in education puts more emphasis on students as humans with potentiality to learn and develop. In the search of knowledge. Scientific truth is not limited to what is taught by the teacher. Teacher has to change his or her role, no longer as the highest authority Guru in knowledge and as indoctrinator but as facilitator that guides students toward the development of knowledge by themselves. Through the new paradigm it is hoped that the students are active in learning, active in discussion, brave to communicate ideas and accept others' ideas so that they have a high level of confidence (Zamroni, 2000).

The constructivist perspective that knowledge is the result of human construction, people do not only imitate or reflect what is taught, but create by themselves concepts of what they experience in the learning process (Dwiyogo, 2008). Knowledge cannot be transferred to other people because actually every person builds his or her own knowledge. The implementation of constructivism in the teaching and learning process results in a method of teaching that stresses the main activity on the students. The learning theory that is based on constructivism treats students as individuals who respond actively objects and event in the environment and acquire understanding about everything related to the objects and events scientifically.

According to this theory, one needs to be aware that students are the main subjects in the discovery of knowledge.. They arrange and build knowledge through various experiences which enable the formation of knowledge. .They have to experience by themselves various experiences which finally will give them insights into certain knowledge. Thus, the most important thing in teaching is that the students need to acquire how to learn (Novak, 1984). Thus, they can become autonomous learners and discover by themselves knowledge that are needed in their lives

Degeng (2001) point of view parallels to the constructivist view that stresses the importance for the students to be aware of his or her reason and goal in learning to him, there is a need to prevent learning that only produces people who merely demand and do

what they are asked to do. Both also agree that there should not be any command and force in learning. Teachers are those who teach, give a model and condition students to become autonomous and play the role in making progress in the social life. If there is any reward and punishment, "the reward and punishment have to come from the individuals themselves as the result of their activities and conditions." this reminds us of the development theory of a cognitive psychologist, Jean Piaget (Degeng, 2001) that children construct by themselves knowledge through experiences in encountering the objects in the environment. Referring to what was said by Piaget, children are learners who have already got motivation to know and will understand by themselves the consequences from their activities.

The main instructional engineering is to provide learning resources. Teacher is not the only learning source. He or she is only one of the learning resources. All learning resources are designed to motivate initiative and learning process will become more effective, efficient and interesting so that the learners remain at home and keep on learning (Dwiyogo, 2008). Therefore, the management and organization of the classroom become the main factor in supporting the creation of student centered classroom environment.

According to Good & Brophy (1991) in an effort to realize this, the teacher has to have two knowledge that he or she understand to make the teaching run efficiently and effectively, i.e., (1) subject matter knowledge and (2) action-system knowledge. Subject matter knowledge covers specific information needed to present the content of teaching. Then action-system knowledge is related to knowledge about who the students are and how they learn and develop, how the class is managed, how information /concepts are explained and how tasks are effectively given to the students.

The learning environment is designed in such a way to stimulate and develop motivation in the students that learning is fun. Class becomes identical with the forum of competition in healthy thinking, so that the teaching can be done well. Students choose by themselves what they want to learn from the global world and manage their own ways of learning by themselves. They are able to find the problems and solve them. If they face the same problems, they will be able to solve them by using their own ways as autonomous individuals.

2. Methods

Research using qualitative method or which is also known as interpretative method (Borg & Gall, 2003), especially phenomenology focuses on understanding and finding meaning construction of the subject's perspective or the perspective of the participant of the study which is expressed from the essence of the structure of the subject's personal experiences (Creswell, 2009). The object of the study was the phenomenon of the learning environment that reflects the subject's ideas or concept about the management of classroom environment at a conducive junior high school classroom environment, both in terms of physical dimension and psychosocial dimension. The subjects in this study were teachers of junior high schools in Ponorogo.

The data were collected using interview, participatory observation which focused on the statements, meanings, meaningful themes, general descriptions about the subjects' experiences, including an analysis of the context (Creswell, 2009). The data were then processed, analyzed and interpreted reflectively, as suggested by Moustakas (1994) through seven steps of phenomenological data analysis, namely (1) recording (making a list) of all expressions of the actors' expressions relevant to the themes of the study; (2) reducing data to prevent overlapping; (3) classifying data based on themes; (4) identifying data by rechecking the completeness of the interview transcript and field notes about the actors'

expressions; (5) using data which were really valid and relevant; (6) arranging imaginative variations from each co-researcher; and (7) arranging meanings and essences of each event according to the themes of the student centered classroom to produce a construction of hypothetic theory developed continually during the study, and which originated from the data in the field..   To guarantee the trust worthinesses of the data collected, the criteria that were used were as follows: (1) credibility by using method triangulation (method of data collection) and source triangulation (informants); (2) transferability by providing sufficient descriptive data to make a decision about transferability; (3) dependability which was done by reviewing and considering all factors related to the data of the study. This was done by being careful to avoid the possibility of making errors in data collection and interpretation; and (4) confirmability, done through an agreement or by rechecking the data sources to ensure that the data obtained were objective.

3. Result And Disscussion
Teaching Materials

The description of the classroom learning at SMP was characterized by pleasant attitudes and behaviors of the students and the teachers the teachers tended to use an independent classroom pattern such as by giving freedom of expression, which was mandatory for the teachers of SMP's in Ponorogo. Another psychological phenomenon that occurred in teaching was a communication which was developed that was very challenging and interesting for the students.

The social relation between the students and the teachers was mutualistic, which is an important element in the the classroom life. The teachers had interest, care, just, democratic and respect for the students which turned out to be able to reduce the students' boredom in learning. The teachers were just and honest which had an impact on the acquisition off academic competences and academic values (Silalahi, 2008).

Sumiarsih (2009) states that conceptually, the teaching process, from the cognitive approach, is not a one-way information acquisition from outside into the inside of the student, but as the giving of meaning to every event by the student in his or her experience through assimilation and accommodation which leads to his or her cognitive updating.

Learning activity is regarded more from its process than from the acquisition of isolated knowledge and facts The giving of meaning to an object and experience is not done by the student himself or herself, but through interaction in a unique social network, which is formed both in the culture in the classroom and outside the classroom.

In an effort to reach meaningful learning process, the role of the classroom environment is to dynamize the students' position during the teaching and learning process. At the personal level, the meaningfulness can be achieved if the students are positioned as they are, as persons with all of the natural capacities that they have. At the sociocultural level, the meaningfulness can be achieved if it is done by the "denaturalization" of the students' natural position, and dynamically and flexibly changed into a socio-cultural position. To do the shift in the students' position from the natural to the socio-cultural position , mediation and facilitation by using psychological instruments were done. Based on the fact above, it becomes clearer that rationally classroom environment has an effect on the learning condition and motivation. It is clear that the development of learning motivation and the maintenance of the consistency in learning motivation depend very much on the conduciveness of the classroom environment in which learning takes place. Hence, it is very important to really develop a classroom environment that is centered on the needs and learning interests of the students to motivate them to learn. However, by not forgetting a

larger scope, the environment (atmosphere) of the school should also be built, since there is a possibility that the conducive classroom atmosphere cannot be built because of the non-conducive school atmosphere.

The Meaning of Teacher's Role

The phenomenon that occurred in the teaching and learning process was that the teacher could not directly give information, but the learning process could occur only when the students were faced with certain realities or objects. . The knowledge that was acquired by the students was based on cognitive structure transformation. Thus, the teacher's tasks in the teaching process. Is to provide concrete knowledge objects, to ask questions according to the students' experiences, or to give real life experiences to be used as the objects for meaning acquisition.

The knowledge is formed in the individual students based on their cognitive structures. This has an implication on the learning process that gives a stress on the students' personal activities. In order for the learning process to run well, the teacher is required to know in detail the level of the students' cognitive development. Based on the teacher's understanding, the teacher is required to design a learning experience that can stimulate the students' cognitive structure to think, interact to form new knowledge.

The status and role of the teacher in the classroom remains important, since a teacher is a leader (Dewey, 2009) who has a wider and deeper knowledge and matured experience. But this does not mean that the teacher has to be dominant or authoritative in the classroom and the students, but the teacher serves as the center of dominance and authority the teacher has to make an effort to expand the students' dominance and authority based on the principle of collegialism, or equal partnership to the students in the students' interest and together with them reach a success in teaching.

Actually, it is admitted that a student has internal abilities in himself or herself, but a student also has weaknesses and limitations which cannot make it possible to solve all problems by himself or herself, through his or her internal functions.

According to Vigotsky (2003) students have zone of approximal development, that is, a region which differentiate between what he or she can do alone (potential development zone), and what he or she can do with the help of others (actual development zone).

Parallel to the reason above, the teacher's role in the classroom learning has to be constantly related to its context. In the curriculum context, teacher plays a role as curricular reformer, that is translating and articulating curricular messages so that they can be understood and have personal meaning for the students, not for the curriculum presenter (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Teacher is the gate keeper (teacher as curricular-instructional gatekeeper); in the sense that teacher, based on his or her experience teaches the students, and based on his or her belief of the nature curriculum, has become a kind of bailey bridge between the demands and expectations of the "curriculum developers" as stated in the school curriculum, by providing more assimilative, accommodative, and adaptive curricular experiences for the students.

In the context of learning materials, teachers plays the role as "transformer" in the sense of transforming knowledge, values, skills, and attitude that are taught to the students into something that is something related to the knowledge, values, skill and attitude that they have acquires and appreciated (Irvine & Armento, 2001); not as presenter of information or textbook presenter.

In the context of teaching and interaction with the students, the teacher plays a role as a teacher not as an authoritative teacher who feels to have a full right over everything

related to the teaching. The role of the teacher in the context of interaction in the classroom with the students is as a decision maker, reflective reformer, cooperative participant, human mediator. He or she has pedagogic role which put the centrality of the teacher role as the source of knowledge. In line with the change in teacher's paradigm in teaching at school, teacher no longer regards students as an empty bottle that has to be filled since actually, they already have knowledge, values, attitude, and action that had been internalize long time before they study at school.

The Meaning of Learning Strategy

It needs to be admitted that students are the main subject in the discovery of knowledge. They arrange and develop knowledge through various experiences that enable the formation of knowledge. They should undergo various experiences which in the end give insight into certain knowledge. The most important thing in teaching is that the student should acquire how to learn (Novak, 1984). In this way, the students can become autonomous learners and can discover by themselves knowledge that they need in life.
Therefore, in the context of teaching strategies, teacher is expected to be able to give support and encouragement to the students to develop themselves according to their potentiality. Teacher is expected to be able to teach students to learn things related to what they face and overcome problems that occur in the community.

Thus, learning activity organizing strategy given by the teacher has to be challenging. The learning activities cover 'physical activities', 'psychological activities', and 'social activities' that are done by students in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The three forms of learning activities are related to intellectual development, self-awareness, and students' social awareness.

The aim of organizing students activities are (1) to create learning condition needed by the students to do 'intellectual relation' that can help in learning and in making progress according to differences in their stages of development, and (2) to create students' learning activities that are original and very fundamental in the effort to encourage the formation of "the child's co-authoring knowledge" (Degeng, 2001; Kozulin, 2003).

For Vygotsky (2003), individual activity serves as an 'explanatory principle' in the sense as: (1) confirmer of respond which the individual is aware of to the new stimuli. It means that individual activities are always in the frame of culturally purposeful and meaningful action; (2) confirmer of the existence of individual initial mental impressions and schema; and (3) confirmer of self-awareness especially in relation to social activities, that occur when individual interacts personally. Individuals will be aware of himself or herself only in and through his or her interaction with others.

The Meaning of Materials and Learning Media

Teaching and instructional media are not the instruments to communicated messages or information from the curriculum; but: (1) as psychological tools that function to mediate and facilitate gaps between students' cognitive content and learning content; (2) to coordinate and arrange students' learning activities to enable reconstruction of contents, operation, and internal function, especially in learning activities that require intellectual relation in high order thinking level. Even Vygotsky (2003) in history of human life, it is the psychological tools that bring humans to a high civilization, because it is through this psychological tools, human can create 'productive knowledge' not 'reproductive knowledge'.

The main principle that needs to be held in presenting materials and instruction media for elementary and high school students, especially in relation to materials of high

abstraction level are: (1) can be understood, explained, and interpreted personally; become sociocultural tools that can mediate students' learning; (2) have relevant and significant socially, culturally, and historically (Bruner, 1996). To reach the two principles, instructional material and media: (1) "must be built on a foundation of direct, empirical experiences". For the students, this principle is very fundamental, especially when students find difficulties in finding abstract relational proposition that are not relevant to their cognitive structure since they loose learning, Ausubel (Stanley & Brickhouse, 2001); (2) use and are communicated in 'language' form which are understood by students, in the sense suitable with students' language ability level) (Thomas, 2004; Kozulin, 2003); (3) have substantive relation (derivative, elaborative, correlative, supportive, qualitative, or representational) with the students' internal structure, so that can retain them as to make the students be able to recognize new teaching contents that they are not yet familiar with Ausubel (in Stanley & Brickhouse, 2001); (4) express especially by teachers into the form of spontaneous concept, genuine concept, or indigenous science which are socioculturally develop from the students' spontaneous reflection result about the universe and are used in their everyday experiences and in interpersonal relation.

4. Conclussions

Vigotsky's sociocultural theory stresses the effect of cultural of students cognitive development. Students' thinking ability will develop at a higher level if the teacher acquire and develop psychological and sociocultural tools. This means that the students' cognitive development is also influenced by social interaction in the cultural context in which he or she lives. Social learning using cultural context will make learning process occurs gradually and meaningfully. Students learn according to their cultural environment and in its turn will give meaningful understanding to him.

Classroom environment that is develop in such a way can contain psychological meaning and sociocultural meaning created as an effort to develop students' role so that it can facilitate and bridge students' learning in high schools in Ponorogo. Teacher has to know how psychological interactional process and sociocultural process are develop to understand the students' development. Teachers' role, teaching strategy, instructional material and media functioned as the tools or mediator of students' learning activity. Thus, classroom learning environment will be develop which focuses on the students. It is suggested for the teachers and researchers that the result of this study can be used as paradigmatic basis on how to develop classroom learning environment which focuses on the students. Thus, the teachers and the researchers can obtain insides when they want to repeat the existing research.

References

Borg, W. R., & Gall, M. D. (2003). *Educational Research*. New York: Longman.

Bruner, J. S. (1996). *The process of education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. London: SAGE Publications.

Degeng, I. N. S. (2001). *Media Pembelajaran Menuju Pribadi Unggul*. Malang: LP3 Universitas Negeri Malang.

Dewey, J. (2009). *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Dwiyogo, D. W. (2008). *Mengembangkan Pembelajaran Visioner*. Malang: Universitas Negeri Malang.

Good, T. L., & Brophy, J. E. (1991). *Looking in Classrooms*. New York: Harper Collins

Publishers.

Irvine, J. J., & Armento, B. J. (2001). *Culturally responsive teaching : lesson planning for elementary and middle grades*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kozulin, A. (2003). Literature as a Psychological Tool. *Educational Psychologist*, *28*(3), 253–264.

Moustakas, C. C. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. United States Agency: SAGE Publications.

Novak, J. D. (1984). *Learning How to Learn*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Silalahi, J. (2008). Pengaruh iklim kelas terhadap motivasi belajar. *Jurnal Pembelajaran*, *30*(2).

Stanley, W. B., & Brickhouse, N. (2001). The Multicultural Question Revisited. *Science Education*, *85*(1), 35–48.

Sumiarsih. (2009). Implementasi Teori Pembelajaran Konstruktivistik Dalam Pembelajaran Mata Kuliah Dasar-Dasar Bisnis. *Pendidikan Akutansi Indonesia*, *8*(1), 54–62.

Thomas, R. M. (2004). *Comparing theories of child development (5th ed.).Comparing theories of child development (5th ed.)*. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.

Zamroni. (2000). *Paradigma Pendidikan Masa Depan*. Yogyakarta: Bigraf Publishing.