



CANTRIK CULTURAL ADAPTATION: STUDENT'S ROLE AS TEACHER ASSISTANT IN MAXIMIZING CLASS LEARNING PROCESS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 5 Jun 2021

Accepted: 20 Des 2021

Published: 29 Des 2021

Keyword:

Teacher Assistant,
Learning Process,
Cantrik

ABSTRACT

In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, a teacher is required to be responsible for his students, in terms of student achievement, health, safety, and welfare. In the learning process in the classroom, teachers are expected to minimize discrimination in the classroom and seek intensive guidance for students with special needs. In Javanese culture, cantrik is known, namely, someone who always follows the teacher; this cantrik culture is close to the term assistance in this modern era. A teacher assistant is someone who supports teacher learning in the classroom. To realize educational services that are following the abilities of each student from each group in the classroom in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic, a teacher should maximize the level of service by taking an assistant from among the students. Assistants from among students can improve student skills, self-confidence and provide a learning atmosphere based on diversity.

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus named COVID-19 was officially declared a pandemic by WHO on March 12, 2020 (WHO, 2020). COVID-19 is a severe acute illness that can cause respiratory syndrome and is a type of virus. The closure of educational institutions occurred due to this pandemic. An estimated 107 countries implemented the closure of educational institutions. It can be said that this pandemic has affected 862 million people across students. That is roughly calculated as half of the world's student population (Viner et al., 2020). In addition, 29 countries closed their educational institutions a week before the official announcement (UNESCO, 2020). The closure of educational institutions is a significant consideration due to this pandemic. That is because many assumptions have emerged that minimizing social contact can reduce

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influenza outbreaks (Jackson et al., 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected education in Indonesia. Many schools from primary to tertiary level are switching from traditional face-to-face education to distance education. Most of the educational institutions are moving exclusively towards online education. Students get an online education by sitting in front of their computer screen or smartphone.

In online learning, the teacher is the spearhead of learning success. Learning is the process of changing students who are minus into pluses. Effective learning cannot be separated from professional teachers. Professional teachers can manage aspects of learning effectively. Aspects of learning include students, teaching materials, learning resources and media. Effective management of learning aspects will encourage students to participate actively during the learning process to be challenged with the lessons discussed with friends and teachers. The teacher's responsibility in the learning process is not only as a teacher but also as an observer, diagnostician, educator, facilitator, counsellor, and leader in the classroom.

The diversity of children in the classroom is still a problem directly faced by teachers and has not become part of school policy regarding the procedures for providing services that must be provided. Teachers still work independently to solve their problems when they encounter children with diverse academic abilities. (Lopes, 2004) confirmed this, which suggests that regular teachers feel many burdens when dealing with students who have learning difficulties who require more time and attention than other friends and do not show results as expected. Ignoring the needs of students with learning difficulties as part of the classroom's diversity can negatively impact other students as they learn not to care about weak peers. This undeveloped sense of empathy in students can continue into adulthood.

The toughest challenges faced by schools in Indonesia in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic are the limited number of "ideal" teachers and a large number of students with various characteristics, especially in schools that are considered favourites by the community. The severe consequence that arises from this is that there is often an excessive workload on the teacher concerned so that the teacher's function as educator, facilitator, observer, diagnostician, counsellor, and leader in the class does not run optimally.

To overcome problems that occur in the learning thing can be taken from the learning system in London, namely the presence of accompanying teachers. A teacher assistant is someone who supports teacher learning in the classroom. Like teachers, teacher assistants are also responsible for the student learning process and report to the teacher if any problems arise. With the existence of a teacher assistant, the teacher will be helped to teach him in overcoming various problems of differences in the acceptance of subject matter for each student. The role of teacher assistants is also significant to maximize the learning process in the classroom while the teacher continues to concentrate on teaching. The teacher assistant system is very close to the *Cantrik* method of learning in Javanese culture.

In the Javanese dictionary, *Cantrik* means *abdining pandhita ngiras dadi murid* (to be a servant of a priest and at the same time a student); *Nyanrik: ngabdi marang pandhita* (dedicate oneself to the teacher); can be equated with an apprenticeship or providing assistance (Tim Balai Bahasa Yogyakarta, 2011). The learning process with the *Nyantrik* method is very focused on the awareness, obedience, motivation, and interest of students to form a competency by absorbing the competence of the mentor teacher. The process of competency transformation in the *Nyantrik* learning model

includes knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes of the transformation process. According to (Salim, 2001) in the *Nyantrik* process, students experience psychological involvement, which at least includes: 1) imitation, 2) identification, 3) internalization, and 4) externalization or actualization.

By involving a teacher assistant or a "*cantrik*", there will be synergy between students and teachers in learning in the pandemic era. Besides that, it can also overcome the excess workload of teachers so that the function of teachers as educators, observers, facilitators, observers, diagnoses, counsellors and leaders in the class can run well. This paper will describe the role of teaching assistants taken from students in maximizing the learning process in the classroom and describe the application of teacher assistants.

DISCUSSION

Description of Teaching Assistants

A teacher assistant is someone who supports teacher learning in the classroom. In the UK, teacher assistants are known as Teaching Assistants, Classroom Assistants, Learning Support Assistants, Child Support Assistants, or Special Needs Assistants. Teacher assistants are often involved in learning outside the classroom or require extra support such as reading, arithmetic, or investigative activities. The involvement of teacher assistants also includes working with children with special education needs, which teachers cannot always accommodate in regular classrooms.

Students with special needs have mental, intelligence, and physical weaknesses and include students who have unique talents and are intelligent. The UK legal regulation on Special Educational Needs refers to students with physical and mental retardation such as Down Syndrome and students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia and communication-interaction disorders such as children with autism. Schools in London are becoming inclusive schools that provide extraordinary services for these children, both in learning activities, extra-curricular activities, school visits, and some exceptions in school activities that are not possible.

Like teachers, teacher assistants are also responsible for the student learning process and report to the teacher if any problems arise. Effective teaching requires the expertise and skills of a qualified teacher. However, trained staff can carry out some teaching activities, provided the staff work within a transparent system of leadership and supervision provided by qualified teachers. These trained staffs are referred to as teacher assistants.

Diversity of Characteristics of School Students

According to Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University, there are no stupid or smart children; children excel in one or more types of intelligence. Howard also stated that intelligence is not something fixed. However, intelligence is a collection of abilities or skills that can be grown and developed. According to him, there are eight kinds of intelligence known as multiple intelligences in every human being. The eight types of children's intelligence include linguistic intelligence, mathematical logic intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, musical intelligence, visual and spatial intelligence, physical kinesthetic intelligence, and naturalist intelligence (Amstrong, 2000).

Linguistic intelligence is the ability to speak. Usually, children with this intelligence prefer to learn by listening. They often excel in language lessons, write poetry, absorb new or unfamiliar vocabulary more quickly, and speak foreign languages

well. Mathematical logic intelligence can be more proficient in using numbers, solving problems logically and mathematically. This type of intelligence is often the benchmark for parents. Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to recognize the emotions of oneself and others. Usually, children who have this intelligence often channel their thoughts by writing diaries to motivate them, think about life philosophy, and develop self-concept. Interpersonal intelligence is intelligence in dealing with other people. Usually, children with this intelligence are more open in socializing, adapt to the environment, empathize, and see from the point of view of others.

Musical intelligence is the nature of children interested in listening to music and playing musical instruments. They are sensitive to sound and can understand the nuances and emotions contained in a song. Children who have visual and spatial intelligence usually like art, painting and sculpture; they can read directions well, enjoy puzzle games. They also like to take notes or explain their thoughts using pictures. Children who have kinesthetic physical intelligence can use the body skillfully, have control, agility, and balance of motion. They like real learning experiences such as field trips; their memory is more potent for what they have seen or experienced.

Naturalist intelligence is the type of intelligence possessed by children who like the natural sciences, love to see plants or animals, are interested in social issues, and can usually read the weather and care about the environment. By knowing the eight multiple intelligences, there are various ways that parents can do to develop their children's intelligence. Indeed, every child cannot be intelligent in all areas, but parents can help their children optimize all the potential in every area of their intelligence. Optimizing all children's potential can be done through the educational process. Students as individuals who are directly involved in learning have various characteristics. The ideal learning must be able to accommodate these individual characteristics.

The Relationship between Diversity of Student Characteristics and Learning

To realize educational services that are following the abilities of each student from each group in the class, a teacher should use a learning strategy based on the diversity of students' different learning abilities. This learning strategy can be applied effectively through changes or adjustments between students' learning abilities with expectations/targets, time allocation, awards/prizes, assignments/work, and assistance provided to students from each diverse group, even though they study in the same class with the same theme and topic.

Examples of the diversity of educational services that are tailored to the characteristics of students, for example, the target of learning mathematics for third-grade elementary school students about multiplication, students who are fast learners (high function learners) understand and can use multiplication in story problems, with analysis at the stage of abstract thinking. Students whose learning abilities are average (average performers) learn multiplication only up to hundreds at the semi-concrete stage, and students who are slow learners (slow learners) recognize new multiplication up to tens with concrete stages.

Likewise, the time allocation, awards/prizes, assignments/jobs, and assistance provided are also adjusted to each group's stages of learning development. So the learning service process is not based on the same form of service, the same taste and is delivered classically, but is directed at more democratic and proportional learning following each group of students' expectations and learning targets. The student learning process is not separated by groups or separated from society, but students learn with their peers in regular classes.

If the student learning process is adjusted to the diversity of each group, then all students in the same class can follow the learning process according to their respective portions. Students who learn fast do not have to get the same subject matter and study time allocation with their peers in general (the average group) or their friends who are slow learners. To grow students' self-confidence in learning, it can be done by giving awards. Giving this reward is needed by all children to develop their self-esteem and identity.

Especially for students classified as slow learners, getting rewards at every step while completing work and the learning process makes them more confident in doing their assignments. In other words, children should be appreciated for what they are. They must feel safe, be able to express their opinion and be successful in their studies. That can help students enjoy learning, and teachers can reinforce student enjoyment by creating more enjoyable classes. In group learning, students must always be supported to feel successful and happy to learn something new. Likewise, mentoring and guidance for intelligent children still need to be provided, although not as much and as intensively as that given to other slow learners. Slow learners need guidance at every stage of their learning. So, if the strategies and atmosphere of the learning process as described above can be realized optimally, it can lead all students to achieve a pleasant learning process.

The Role of Teacher Assistants in Maximizing the Learning Process

The role of teacher assistants is to assist teachers in developing students' thinking skills on the subject matter they receive. Some of the teacher assistant roles are (1) preparing equipment and materials for teaching and cleaning up afterwards; (2) guide one by one or group of students who need help in understanding the lesson; (3) assisting students who are injured while attending sports lessons; and (4) collecting displays of children's work.

The teacher assistant's role above is significant to maximize the learning process in the classroom while the teacher continues to concentrate on teaching. The diversity of students' abilities in understanding the material is not a problem for teachers if they assist the teaching in guiding their students to learn. With the help of teacher assistants, the teacher's function as facilitator, observer, diagnostician, counsellor and leader in the classroom will run optimally. Experienced and specially trained teacher assistants can supervise classes if a teacher is on sick leave or duty.

In all schools in London, for example, at Horsenden Primary School, London, teacher assistants assist teachers in teaching. Children with special needs gather in the same school like normal children. Like Torriano Junior School, London, each class is led by a teacher and assisted by one or two assistant teachers. The assistant's job is to help students with special needs. In addition, special learning packages are also provided for students with special needs.

Teacher Assistant Recruitment Process from Students

Someone to become a teacher assistant in the education system in London must go through the stages of the education process. The recruitment process for accompanying teachers in schools begins when students (prospective teachers) carry out teaching practices, the term is School Experience Placement (SEP). Teaching practice is a place for students to apply the basics of their educational profession. Teaching practices are applied in learning observations, teaching practices and other educational activities in school institutions. Students will be guided by a supervisor (*guru pamong*) for later evaluation through this teaching practice. Teaching students in schools is carried out periodically until they are about to graduate from their educational program.

In Indonesia, unfortunately, not all subjects have the opportunity to get mentor teachers from students. For example, in the subject of Javanese language, very few universities open Javanese language study programs in East Java; as far as the researcher knows, there is only one, namely at the State University of Surabaya, at the State University of Malang, there are indeed underage Javanese. Unfortunately, students at this university are rarely placed as assistant teachers in the Javanese language.

There is a middle way so that the burden of teachers who do not get assistant teachers from among students is to recruit assistant teachers from among students. This system adapts the *Cantrik* method, which has long existed in Javanese culture. The advantage that students get after mentoring is that they have more experience and are psychologically close to the teacher; students also can gain knowledge more fully because they receive direct guidance from the teaching teacher.

Before recruiting assistants from among students, teachers need to know the pre-assessment to determine the diversity of students' characters. One method that can be used is a case-based reasoning approach. Several studies can be used to conduct this pre-assessment stage, namely research (Yulianti, 2016) researching determining student interests and talents using the K-Nearest Neighbor method. The approach using this method requires weighting from an expert, while the use of SMC is purely based on the similarity of attributes that appear in the target case and source case compared to the overall attributes used in this study. Giving value weights is a crucial process because it will significantly affect the results of the recommendations given. Research that uses the CBR approach in determining a person's personality has also been carried out previously by (Hardianto & Kusuma, 2019) who also uses the calculation of the similarity of K-Nearest Neighbor, and it is stated in the study that the weight of personality symptom values can change at any time depending on their knowledge psychologist.

By determining the types of interests and talents, the teacher knows the character of the interests and talents of the students who will be his companions. In general, the best children to become teacher assistants are those with interpersonal talents and interests. According to research (Yulianti, 2016), children in interpersonal groups have professional recommendations as teachers.

Table 1. Types of Interest and Talents (Yulianti, 2016)

Kode	Types of Interest and Talents
MB1	Linguistics
MB2	Naturalist
MB3	Intrapersonal
MB4	Mathematical-logical
MB5	Interpersonal
MB6	Musical
MB7	Visual-spatial
MB8	Kinesthetic

However, other students who do not have Interpersonal talents and interests do not hurt to be beautiful; maybe in class, children with these interest and talent criteria appear more minimal. After conducting a pre-assessment, the teacher only needs to schedule each child to accompany him to become an assistant so that several children get the same opportunity; it is better for one child only to get the opportunity to mentor the teacher for one meeting for one year of study.

In addition to conducting pre-assessments and determining schedules, another

thing that is no less important in recruiting accompanying teachers from among students is that teachers make guidelines for becoming teaching assistants. With the guidance of teacher assistants, teachers can carry out peer-to-peer learning at a later stage. What is meant by peer-to-peer learning is that students who have become teacher assistants can teach prospective students how to become teacher assistants; the teacher only needs to add if what the previous assistant said was not good. Therefore, it is ideal for maximizing the role of teachers by procuring teacher assistants to reduce the teacher's workload to the maximum.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A teacher assistant is someone who supports teacher learning in the classroom. The role of teacher assistants is to assist teachers in developing students' diverse thinking skills in the subject matter they receive. The role of teacher assistants is significant to maximize the learning process in the classroom while the teacher continues to concentrate on teaching. With the help of teacher assistants, the teacher's function as facilitator, observer, diagnostician, counsellor and leader in the classroom will run optimally. The placement of assistant teachers from among students needs to be done at the pre-assessment and scheduling stages and intensive mentoring at the beginning.

Based on the discussion above, there are several suggestions submitted to improve the quality of education related to maximizing learning activities in schools, namely:

- 1) The existence of teacher assistants who help the primary teacher to serve the needs of students with diverse characters in each school;
- 2) Seeing the magnitude of the influence of the accompanying teacher, students experience psychological involvement, which at least includes: 1) imitation, 2) identification, 3) internalization, and 4) externalization or actualization so that the application of the teacher assistant system needs to be widely piloted in schools during the COVID-19 period.
- 3) Every educational environment must create a conducive learning atmosphere, such as establishing good cooperation between teachers, students, and other school staff as one big team and having the same vision to achieve common goals.

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