

HUMANISTIC EDUCATION IN ACCOMODATING THE SLOW LEARNERS' LEARNING NEEDS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF SPECIAL DISTRICT OF YOGYAKARTA

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Abstract

'This research aims at describing the slow learners' learning needs in the primary school as well as the teachers' affords in humanizing the education. A survey design with the instrumentation of learning need identification, open questionnaire, and open interview were used to collect the research data. The data were then analyzed by categorizing the slow learners' learning needs. The finding of the research shows that the slow learners need accommodation in term of learning method that is by actualizing numerical symbol through operating the number through games and dramatization; and by implementing the symbol through games and giving meaning toward the alphabetical codes. The accommodation toward the learners' learning needs requires a humanistic education approach. The approach emphasizes the students' self actualization toward the empowering unique individual.

Keywords: humanistic education, slow learners' learning needs

Introduction

The term slow learners (SL) refer to the categorization of the students within the borderline schools indicating the averaged intelligence and the below averaged intelligence. Commonly, slow learners are low in conceptual domain yet are good at practical and social domains. They need a specific learning approach which is different from the normal learners. That special learning approach should be learner-centered. The slow learners should be treated as potential individuals. The approach should be humanistic oriented. The humanistic approach is highly recommended for the SL's learning problem for it humanize each individual possessing to grow in accordance with his or her uniqueness. Rewarding the SL's potency prompts the teachers to facilitate the SL's growth with appropriate learning activities through practical and social strategies.

Humanistic education is rooted in progressivism and existentialism philosophy which emphasize the individual uniqueness and potency. As a perspective, humanism grows variously. Bambang Sugiarto (2008: xviii) maintains that humanism grows not only as a cultural movement but also as a reflective belief on the very nature, instinctive, and inherent process of human life. The dynamic fluctuation forms what precious for human being. Such belief is a minimum principle to measure the validity of the system of value, trust, and authority which is externally attached to an individual. Thus, the individual is the vitality as well as the potential for life. The appreciation toward an individual, than, is central to the treatment of SLs for it is the reflective manifestation of humanistic attitude.

One of the actions accommodating SL's learning needs is by implementing the humanistic approach within the school environment. Teaching activity is seen as an appropriate effort of SL conditioning. The SLs need guidance from the teacher so that they would be able to cope with their learning difficulties, particularly those related to abstract concepts. Therefore, the teacher needs to develop an instructional design that suits SL's learning needs. A research on the SL's learning needs is, then, needed in order to develop an appropriate instructional design.

A SL belongs to a child with special needs that are commonly found in school yet are hard to be identified. Steven Shaw, Darlene Grimes, Jodi Bulman (2005: 11) state that "*Slow learners are children who are doing poorly in school, yet are not eligible for special education*". The phrase 'not eligible' refers to a special problem appearing obscure. The SL cannot be categorized as a mentally retarded child with for she or he is intellectually good. The SL's score is a little higher than that of a child with mental retardation. The SL's score is commonly below the average of a normal child. Obviously, SL needs special education but she or he does not need to go to a special school.

An SL is commonly categorized as 'borderline mentally retarded'. Sangeeta Malik (2009: 61) maintains that "*they are generally slower to 'catch on' to whatever is being taught if it involves symbolic, abstract or conceptual subject matter*". Sangeeta also states that the common characteristics of an SL are lacking concentration and low ability in thinking abstractly. Many times, an SL has a good achievement in a non-academic activity. Therefore, SL needs an instructional model consisting more concrete learning resources. This notion is underpinned by the research conducted by Sugapriya G & Ramachandran C (2011: 949) stating that animation model with computer is a suitable strategy for SL. Another research from Najma Iqbal Malik, Ghazala Rehman & Rubina Hanif (2012: 147) finds that SL's academic competency can be increased through a learning process that involves all senses.

Education for SL should focus on the involving of all senses and the utilizing of concrete medium in explaining symbolic matters. SL needs a multi-presentation while learning in public elementary school. Thus, SL ought to go to a public school instead of a special school. SL needs some relevant adjustments in his or her learning process. In such, an inclusion model might be a reasonable implication of SL learning in elementary school.

SLs should learn in a public school because they are capable of adjusting themselves with the curriculum of the public school. Some adjustments of the curriculum are needed to suit the SL's needs. Such adaptation is supported by Wehmeyer, Hughes, et. al. (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003: 415-428) "have suggested too levels of curriculum modification as important in the education of students with significant cognitive disabilities: adapting the curriculum and augmentatif the curriculum". Curriculum adaptation embraces material presentation method, the students' responses, and students' involvement in the learning process. Such adaptation is a principle of inclusion implementation. In addition, augmentatif curriculum refers to an action of perpetuating the existing curriculum and at the same time adding more learning strategies. Such addition includes the students' strategies in organizing, directing, planning their own learning. Those could be possible alternatives for teachers in public schools to accommodate SL learning needs.

The need of sending SLs to public school is also strengthened by Haskvitz, 2007(Najma I.M.; Ghazala R. & Rubina H., 2012: 146). It is stated that researchers recognized the cognitive constraints of SLs in that they will find it difficult to access the so-termed paper-pencil information. SLs need creative activities to link and internalize the information. In such, SLs will be attain the objectives of learning. The attainment itself, however, should be supported with self-esteem, aptitude for learning, and individualized education. The last mentioned is stated by Krishnakumar, Geeta, & Ramakrishnan (2006: 24).

Creativity, self-concept, and learning skill of SL could be achieved through an instruction that emphasizes self-actualization and skills. Knezewich, 1975 (Sugapriya & Ramachandran, 2011: 948) pays special attention to the adequate infrastructure for physical activities. In addition, Balo1971 (Sugapriya & Ramachandran, 2011: 948) states that *“Audio-visual materials, as integral part of teaching-learning situations help to bring about permanent and meaningful experience.”* Furthermore, he suggests that learning experience is likely to be achieved when it is feasible. Najma I.M.; Ghazala R. & Rubina H., (2012: 147) maintain that the majority of SLs would take benefit from academic intervention such as dramatization, role play, poem reading, and story telling. The above relevant researchers imply that SLs should learn under the implementation of humanistic approach. It has also been stated that the curriculum implementation within the inclusive schools require various teaching strategies. To cope with SL’s cognitive condition, the abstract material should be delivered through self actualization and practical activities.

Some argumentations on SL learning needs would provide a basis to recommend the education program for SL in the mainstream schools. Sangeeta Chauhan (2011: 282-286) states that such program should include *“motivation, individual attention, restoration and development of self-confidence, elastic curriculum, remedial instruction, healthy environment, periodical medical check-up, dan special methods of teaching.”* As the first step, SLs should be initiated into remedial instruction because it reflects humanistic approach. In addition, the elements of the education program as mentioned by Sangeeta Chauhan are believed to help the SLs learn effectively and reach a good level of self-confidence.

Humanistic approach is rooted in the philosophical assumption stating that the children are the center. Knight (1982) argues that *“The humanists have adopted most of the progressive principles including child-centeredness, the non-authoritative role of the teacher, the focus on the active and involved pupil, and the cooperative and democratic of education”*. Knight (1982: 87) also suggests that the focus of education are to help the students to be “humanized” and “self-actualized”. Humanistic approach assumes that the goal of education is for *“self-actualization rather than a mastery of knowledge as an end in itself”* (Knight, 1982: 88).

The student's self-actualization and character are seen as much more important than knowledge attainment. Therefore, accommodating SL's learning needs means helping them with their process of self-actualization. It could be done by equipping SL with the skill to integrate conceptual symbols being learned; appreciating them as human; and providing them with opportunity to grow.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design used in this writing is Research and Development (R&D) Gall, Gall & Borg (2003: 569). The model was adapted from industrial field when designing new product and new procedure. It consisted of *field-tested*, *evaluated*, and *refined* until a specific criteria of effectiveness, quality, and standard are found. The R & D used in this research refers to the model which has been adjusted into educational field by Dick & Carry (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003: 570-571). This model consists of the following stages: Stage I, the researcher 1) compiles research instrument to identify SLs in primary schools; 2) validates the instrument through expert judgment and focus group discussion; 3) implements the selection stage in the field; and 4) gains the profile of SLs and their learning needs. Stage II: 5) composes the draft of the product guideline. At the present time, the research reaches the stage of SLs selection as well as their learning needs. Therefore, the research progress are as follow:

Step 1: instrument compilation and SLs identification. The researcher has reviewed related theories and relevant researches and examined various components and indicators for identifying and assessing SLs. The main objective of step 1 is to gain a valid and feasible instrument for selecting and identifying SL's learning needs in primary school.

Step 2: instrument validation through expert judgment and teachers' focus group discussion. This step was conducted to gain relevant indicators and items that can be utilized by the teachers for identifying and assessing the SL's learning needs.

Step 3: Selection implementation in the field. Borg & Gall suggests that this step is aimed at gathering initial information of qualitative evaluation of the new product of the model instrument. In this stage, the researcher selected the primary schools purposively. Other than implementing the instrument, this step was aimed at obtaining SLs profile in the primary schools.

Step 4: the profile of SLs and their learning needs. In this step, the researcher analyses and synthesizes the information to map the SL's profile in the primary school.

The data of the research were collected through observation, interview, questionnaire, FGD (Focus Group Discussion), and documentation. The observation was supported by a guideline and observation note while the interview was conducted in both structured and unstructured forms. The researcher interviewed the teachers and the students. The questionnaire was used to gain more subtle data. Meanwhile, documentation was used to collect other supporting data.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings cover the description of the FGD, research instrument refinement for the selection of SLs and their learning needs, cases of learning problems experienced by SLs in the first, second, and third year of elementary schools, and the treatments given by the teachers in response to the problems.

The FGD results show that the research question and the teachers' efforts in addressing the SL's learning problems need to be synchronized. The researcher and teachers should have common ground on what SL is and on what substantial aspects of learning are. Those aspects cover early learning of reading and writing in Indonesia language, and accounting and operating numbers. The academic aspect is seen through its achievement, the constraints of not achieving the class standards, technical and substantive difficulties faced by SLs to reach reading, writing, and accounting competencies. The teachers were also required to address the treatment they provided for the SLs.

The researcher found some constraints and difficulties in learning for SLs in 10 primary schools in Yogyakarta covering the first, second, and third year students. Such problems are related to accounting, reading, and writing. With regards to the form of the accounting problems, there were 12 forms in the first year; 8 forms in the second year; and 6 forms in the third year. With regards to the form of the reading problems, there were 5 forms in the first year; 6 forms of the second year; and 4 forms in the third year. With regards to the form of the writing problems, there were 4 forms in the second year, and 3 forms in the third year. The following chart provides the information in details:

1. Types and the forms of accounting problems

Table 1
The Forms of SL's Accounting Problems
Primary Schools in Yogyakarta

No	The forms of accounting problem of the first year	The forms of accounting problem of the second year	The forms of accounting problem of the third year
1	At the end of the semester, SLs can only account the accumulative of 10.	SLs cannot reach the class standard of accounting the accumulative of 1000 well.	SLs could do multiplication up to the cumulative of 50, while division up to the cumulative of 100.
2	SLs cannot account sequentially.	SLs need a scaffolding to finish their accounting tasks.	Summing smaller than 50
3	SLs' ability in summing the numbers is up to 10 only	SLs find it hard to do multiple multiplication.	SLs still need help to accomplish a subtraction.
4	SLs still use their fingers to in the up to	SLs cannot operate the subtraction with	SLs still find it difficult to finish multiplication

	10 subtraction.	larger or a more complicated numbers.	and division.
5	SLs cannot do the accounting which is higher than the total of their fingers.	SLs are sometimes cannot differ multiplication from summing.	SLs still need a medium to divide numerical problems.
6	SLs can only operate numerical problems up to 50 which is under the class standard of 100.	SLs cannot account from 100 to 500 sequentially.	SLs cannot solve numerical problems which are higher than 50. Sometimes they can only operate 30.
7	Belum mengetahui angka SLs do not recognize numbers well.	SLs do not understand what division and multiplication are.	
8	SLs will utilize their finger to account from 1 to 10 and will utilize the palm leaves to account higher than 10.	Few SLs still do not know how to sum, subtract, divide, and multiply	
9	Few SLs can only subtract in the range of 1 to 5.		
10	SLs still need their fingers and the palm leaves to sum and subtract.		
11	SLs used a short sequence to account from 10 to higher numerical operation.		
12	SLs utilize the drawing of the palm leaves to account from 10 to higher numerical operation.		

The above findings show the variety of problems faced by SLs in term of accounting within the context of elementary school. The problems have something to do with the abstract symbols existing in the process of accounting learning. Thus, the symbols should be integrated into activities where SLs can actualize themselves and deal with a more concrete explanation. Nevertheless, in the research time the teachers have tried to utilize teaching aids in explaining accounting.

2. Types and the forms of reading problems

Tabel 2
The Forms of SL's Reading Problems
Primary Schools in Yogyakarta

No	The forms of reading problem of the first year	The forms of reading problem of the second year	The forms of reading problem of the third year
1	SLs cannot memorize A to Z	SLs cannot pronounce clearly in reading.	SLs read the text slowly and repeatedly.
2	Hanya sampai mampu membaca kata-kata tertentu SLs can only read certain words.	SLs find it difficult to read the words with 'ng' and 'nya' within.	SLs rely much on spelling.
3	SLs rely much on spelling.	SLs find it hard to understand a text consisting of more than 3 sentences.	SLs find it hard to respond the questions generated from a given text.
4	SLs spell syllabically.	SLs find it difficult to read a word consisting of more than 3 syllables.	SLs find it hard to read double consonant like 'ng'.
5	SLs cannot pronounce words correctly.	SLs often miss a letter in a sentence.	
6		SLs reads very slowly.	

The findings show that SLs find it hard to put reading as a decoding process. The common problem lies in the effort of understanding the codes as sound symbols. Therefore, a humanistic approach suggests that teachers present and internalize the symbols through self-actualization and practical activities. This will promote and appreciation and individual self-actualization.

3. Types and the forms of writing problems

Tabel 3
The Forms of SL's Writing Problems
Primary Schools in Yogyakarta

No	The forms of writing problem of the first year	The forms of writing problem of the second year	The forms of writing problem of the third year
1	SLs often exchange the following letters: b and p; p, m, n, u, and v.	SLs cannot produce readable writing.	SLs cannot organize letters into words, and words into sentences well.

2	SLs cannot differentiate an almost identical letters like b and d; m and n.	SLs often miss a letter.	SLs find it hard to write dictation material.
3	Tulisan tidak terbaca SLs' writing cannot be read.	SLs cannot write what the teacher dictates.	SLs will write a thing repeatedly.
4	SLs dictates letter per letter when they have to write.	SLs cannot combine letters into words.	
5	SLs write letters incompletely.		
6	SLs do not want to write.		
7	SLs write letters incompletely.		

SLs' writing problems are closely related to the effort of reproducing the symbols so that they would be understandable for other people. Such problems would be solved if writing activity is conducted through actualizing daily activities. The function of symbols is actualized in daily life activities. In such, the humanistic approach encourages the SLs to produce symbols and connecting them with daily life activities.

The above mapping results show that accounting problems are the most frequent and various than writing problems and reading problems. This fact indicates that the students are facing the problems of coding. When learners find it difficult to produce symbols, they tend to be unmotivated. They are likely to be reluctant to accomplish the tasks and to follow additional class. Thus, they need appropriate appreciation and encouragement from the teachers. In this case, humanistic approach is needed.

The learners categorized as SL basically have tried to adjust themselves to the abstract subjects. They have utilized the palm leaves to help them account something which cannot be reached by their fingers. Therefore, SLs in the early primary schools need more help to understand the symbols and to cope with the coding process. Such need is urgent for it influences such basic competencies as reading, writing, and accounting. Those competencies are needed to deal with other fields in life.

Meanwhile, the teachers have tried to provide appropriate treatment to cope with the students' learning problems. Some of the treatments are: 1) utilizing other potential of SLs in order to motivate them; 2) using various learning resources to ease the SLs' learning process; 3) utilizing pictures as teaching aids; 4) explaining a subject orally and repeatedly; 5) exemplifying through teaching aids; 6) utilizing touchable media; 7) interviewing the SLs to ensure their understanding; 8) calling the SLs' names to attract their attention; 9) allowing the SLs to use relevant aids; 10) encouraging other students to help the SLs; 11) ensuring the SLs' attention; 12) conditioning the SLs' seating arrangement in the first row; 13) repeating the explanation; 14) providing additional lesson after the class; 15) providing a special remedial program; 16) setting up an easy homework for SLs; 17) reducing SLs assignments; 18) administering easier test for SLs; 19) providing assistance for SLs in accomplishing tasks; 20) reading the text for SLs; 21) assisting the SLs to write; 22) providing more time for SLs in accomplishing assignments; 23) allocating special space for SLs; 24) giving SLs a self-corrected

assignment; 25) giving SLs graded tasks starting from the easiest to the more difficult ones; 26) reminding the parents to assist the SLs at home; and 27) consulting with experts in the fields about the problems faced by SLs.

The teachers commonly do the following to help SLs: appreciating the potential of SLs; utilizing relevant resources for SLs; utilizing pictures; providing oral explanation; modeling or exemplifying; utilizing touchable teaching aids. The most frequent treatment from the teacher is calling the SL's name so that he or she would feel as being appreciated and cared. On the other hand, the less frequent treatment are assigning the SLs to accomplish self-corrected task, providing them with additional equipments like computer and calculator. The frequent treatments, then, are categorized as alternative actions of utilizing media, teaching aids, and learning resources. They are easy to conduct. The same is true with personally call the SL's name. On the contrary, providing the SLs with different and special assignments are rarely implemented.

Providing SLs with special assignment often means modifying the teaching strategy due to the learner factor. Thus, the existing curriculum for normal learners should be adjusted to suit the needs of SLs. Wehmeyer, Hughes, et. al. (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003: 415-428) *"have suggested too levels of curriculum modification as important in the education of students with significant cognitive disabilities: adapting the curriculum and augmentatif the curriculum"*. Curriculum adaptation by modifying presentation model, students' responses, and students' involvement. Adaptation is central to inclusion implementation. It is generally accepted that augmentative curriculum does not mean to change the current curriculum but to add the learning strategies within. Such addition embraces the strategies used by teachers to arrange, direct, and help the students to organize their own learning. The teachers of public schools could refer to the above strategies when dealing with SLs. The mapping result on SLs' learning needs departs from the problems faced by the first, second, and third year SLs in accounting, reading, and writing. It shows that SLs need mediation in term of abstract materials and of coding process. Such needs could be fulfilled through curriculum adaptation and augmentative curriculum. The assignments for SLs should be designed in the way they give opportunity for SLs to involve in and solve their own problems. Therefore, the SLs should be asked to actualize the abstract concepts through concrete actions.

Providing assignment as the basic of the action is in line with the notion proposed by Najma I.M.; Ghazala R. & Rubina H., (2012: 147). It states that the majority of SLs are benefited from the academic intervention which is implemented through drama, role play, poem reading, and storytelling. Those activities can also be adapted into remedial activities devised for SLs. It also corresponds with Sangeeta Chauhan's (2011: 282-286) about *motivation, individual attention, restoration and development of self-confidence, elastic curriculum, remedial instruction, healthy environment, periodical medical check-up, dan special methods of teaching*. The remedial program refers to the assignments of implementing conceptual material into simulation. The simulation will increase the SLs' self-esteem. Within the context of Curriculum 2013 implementation, the simulation, with certain adaptation into augmentative curriculum, fits the fourth core competency (KI 4).

The result of this research shows that most teachers still direct their orientation into the use of various media, teaching aids, and learning resources. The teachers stated that they commonly do the following activities when dealing with SLs: providing the SLs with additional reading books on letters; utilizing drawing books; utilizing puzzles related to letters and numbers; utilizing cards containing letters and numbers; using pictures; using concrete objects, using accessories, and utilizing embossment. The teachers have not yet directed their orientation into the variety of assignments and learning experience conducted through action or drama. Thus, the teachers need to implement teaching strategies that lead into SLs' self actualization.

The implementation of humanistic approach, to certain extent, means adding the assignment variety in the form of activities for SLs. The activities would optimize the meaningful information perceptiveness of SLs. In such, the information flow would suit the SLs' needs. Furthermore, the SLs should be encouraged to reproduce their knowledge through activities which are easily found in their real daily life.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The SLs' needs in the elementary school level include: accounting and numeric operation, and the numeric cumulative achievement which is still under the class standard. With regards to reading problems, SLs interpret the letter form and its combination into word, particularly when the letter ends with a double consonant sound. On the contrary, the problems of reading influence the problems of writing particularly in combining letters into one word or sentence. Thus, the problems require treatment from teachers. They could help the students by adjusting their teaching strategies and by arranging the information aimed at developing SLs' self-actualization. The symbols within number and letter operation could be addressed through dramatization and role play. These kinds of stimulation are aimed at empowering the SLs so that they could digest their learning problems. Such is the implementation of humanistic approach.

Suggestion

The implementation of number and letter tends to be addressed as symbols that make it difficult for SLs to understand. Therefore, such implementation should be supported by simulation activities like games and actions. A teacher could, then, incorporate the simulation into his or her teaching strategies.

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