

UNLEASHING LEARNING POTENTIALS AMONG PASSIVE STUDENTS

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Abstract: *There is a significant relationship between students' passiveness in the classroom with the level of their motivation in a learning environment. This heavily influences the outcome of a particular learning goal, since motivation has a significant impact to students' level of effort to learn. This paper discussed on the importance for educators to explore the needs of passive students in order to ensure that these students will not be left behind in achieving the learning goals in the classroom. This includes the need to evaluate the students learning preferences, understanding the reasons for them to be passive and the roles of teachers in facilitating these students to achieve their full learning potentials. This includes the efforts that are needed from the teacher to experiment with various teaching and classroom management skills, since it is found that teachers who are able to cater to the needs of passive students were able to produce positive outcomes and nurture better learning habits among passive students.*

Keyword: *Passive students, Learning motivation, Learning preferences*

Introduction

Motivation is defined as the desire in the effort of achieving a targeted goal and this is combined with the effort put on in the process to work on the determined goal (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). In a classroom, Sternberg (2005) stated that motivation determines the students' level of success in learning. The lack of motivation in classroom will cause the lack of effort to learn. Saeed and Zyngier (2012) discusses about the relation between students' engagement in classroom with their level of motivation in learning. They categorized the engagement in classroom with students' level of success in learning. Relating this with the problem of passive students in a classroom; their state of motivation or 'desire' in participating in the classroom activities and knowledge transfer is seen as the main contributor towards their passiveness in achieving the targeted goal of learning and giving feedbacks through the teacher-student

interaction in the classroom. Assaf (2018) discussed on the lack of motivation and its influence in creating students who would turn to be passive receiver of knowledge in a classroom. This is defined as 'motivation deficit' whereby the lack of motivation is shown through the lack of involvement among the students (Lau & Habibah, 2011).

Discussion

Carskadon (1978) stated that introverted students are those who have a lot of thoughts in mind with little action compared to those who are extroverted who tend to resort to action with fewer thoughts given on a particular issue. The tendency to hesitate in voicing out and listening to these thoughts are connected with the motivation of a passive student where the 'desire' to participate in the classroom activities hinders them to be proactive enough in learning. The norm of the world which prioritize the ability to be 'outspoken and easy going' and the practice of considering these abilities to be the 'winning traits' of a person have made it harder for introverted individuals to compete due to the feeling of being 'left out or inadequate' in terms of qualities (Ramli, 2010). This clearly leads towards the fact that these passive students would feel that they have to compete with the extroverted or active peers in the classroom. As a result, this led passive students to their 'comfort zone' where they would not need to risk being embarrassed or competitive in the classroom.

An example of this situation can easily be observed through passive students who are usually among those who are unlikely to ask questions to their teacher or volunteering in answering questions from their teacher (Lee, 2005). From this, a clear picture of the lack of motivation, derived by shyness or low level of confidence; led them away from the teaching and learning sessions in their own classroom. This particular situation affects them in terms of their performance in the classroom because the unwillingness among passive students to participate in the process of learning leads to problems which affect academic achievement (Barret & Connot, 1986). Often problems in academic achievement indicate the lack of knowledge or mastery in a certain knowledge area.

Lau and Habibah (2011) cited a study by the Ministry of Education that shows 0.8% of Malaysian secondary school students did not master the skills of 3R; reading, writing and arithmetic (National Education Blueprint 2006-2010) and the lack of knowledge triggered by the lack of motivation in participating in the process of learning in class; is certainly among the main contributor of this percentage. Therefore, in the effort to curb this percentage to grow into a larger number, motivating students who are not motivated to learn, such as passive learner; is crucial. Williams and Williams (2011) asserted that a consistent motivation is needed in order to maximize students' learning ability. Solution of this particular issue lies in the ability of the teacher to manipulate the classroom surrounding. This is further supported by Creemers (1994) who stated that the effectiveness of instructions in school depends on the ability of teachers to organize the classroom accordingly (as cited in Lau & Habibah, 2011).

Fisher (1990) indicated three major sources of learning motivation among the students; student's natural interest or intrinsic satisfaction in learning, teacher's reactions towards their interest or extrinsic rewards from the teacher, and the outcome of the test or the combination of the intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic reward mentioned earlier (as cited in Hasan, 2006), as what been influencing a student's desire to participate and learn in the classroom. In other words, extrinsic feedbacks from the teacher such as acknowledgement of a particular passive

student's work or effort influenced the intrinsic need of that particular student to feel appreciated in the classroom thus motivating them to learn and participate even more in the classroom.

Passive students tend to prefer a learning environment which includes less interaction through activities planned in smaller groups compared with the extrovert students who prefer a lot of interaction in learning (Myers, 1062) (as cited in Lee, 2005). This can be seen in a classroom scenario where the active students were more outgoing and participating in discussions in the classroom (Galvan & Fukada, 1998). Therefore, teachers need to be aware of students' contextual learning approach to overcome the limitations of passive students (Harun, Yusof, Ibrahim & Abdullah, 2015)

The differences in terms of participation, feedbacks and interaction among the active and passive students shows that a classroom would likely consist students with different learning methodologies preferred. This is the reason why the Ministry of Education had revised the school curriculum of both primary and secondary schools to cater and bring the gap between learning tendencies among students of different characteristics closer (Effandi & Zainaton, 2006). However, in the implementation level; the possibilities of a teacher to cater to all of the students' needs combined with the responsibilities to serve the syllabus while making sure of thorough understanding and comprehension among the students on the topics taught; is doubtful. Most teachers do not have enough 'time and energy' to cater to the needs of 'quieter students' while other students who are more proactive in the class are seeking for immediate 'responses from their teacher on the inquiries and ideas that they have in mind' (Ramli, 2010). As a result, most teachers failed to cater to the needs of passive students in the class thus encouraging these introverted learners to be even more reluctant to overcome their anxiety and leave their 'comfort zone' by participating in the teaching and learning process initiated by their teacher. However, putting too much attention to them would also cause passive students to be uneasy in learning, 'for they will feel like they are being singled out or patronized' by the teacher (Ramli, 2010). Honstra, Stroet, Eijden, Goudsblom and Roskamp (2018) stated that teachers may elicit unsuitable teaching behaviors due to incorrect teaching expectations. This creates more issues in learning for students; for they would feel burdened by teacher's expectations along with the responsibility to learn in the classroom.

Moreover, in worst cases; there are teachers who implement learning styles that are based on their own ways of learning (Lau & Habibah, 2011), despite of the fact that this method does not cater to students' needs, especially those who are passive students; because introverted learners' preferences in learning are different from the preferences of both of their extroverted friends and also the teacher. Besides that, Townsend (1998) indicated several other reasons which contribute to the issue of students being passive in class are; uncertainty about the content that they are learning, feeling of boredom and natural characteristic of being shy (as cited in Ramli, 2010). In addition to that, lack of preparation and interest are also among other contributing factors.

Therefore, teachers should be wise in choosing, manipulating and integrating their teaching methodologies in order to serve the needs of all the students, especially those who need additional help and extra extrinsic motivation such as the passive students. Vygotsky's theory explains how combination of a teacher's instructional tools and discourses would benefit the

students in terms of creating possibilities for the students to participate in the classroom (Maziha, 2011). Therefore, references towards various teaching pedagogies and theories are among the contributing factors which would benefit and cater to various students' learning styles and preferences.

Goh and Khine (2002) stated that another factor which influences the students' behavior in the classroom is the relationship built between a teacher and his or her students whereby a good teacher-student relationship would be able to create a constructive and positive learning environment in the classroom. Derived by the motivation gained from the positive relationship built with the teacher, passive students would be motivated to learn through participation in the class. However, Ghani et al. (1991) indicated that 'relationship between teachers and student in Malaysia are weak' and need further improvement in order to increase participation from the students.

Personalities of human are different in nature where some are confident while others prefer to remain quiet (Ramli, 2010) and the differences of passive and active students' criteria had obviously exemplified the differences. The most influential reason which influenced a student's preference to be passive in the class is largely connected with his or her own background. Student's background covers large aspects of life of the students and these aspects vary from personal experiences to cultural influences faced by the student along the way of growing up. Baldwin and James (1997) supported this by stating that students' background is among the reasons why the students would 'treat everything educators say with deference and not be prepared to argue with educators in public' even though these passive students might think critically 'in private' about the subject matter discussed with the teacher in the classroom (as cited in Ramli, 2010).

Lee (2005) stated that the problem of passive or introverted student are largely connected to the concept of self-esteem that is built based on student's background and experiences which they've gone through. The confidence built in them in interacting are based on the social setting they are in. In the context of being a passive student in Malaysia, most of the contributing factor of the lack of self-esteem refers to culture or social surrounding as the main cause. This is further supported by Baldwin and James (1997) who stated that culture and upbringing of the students from Asian countries 'taught then not to question authorities' such as teachers and parents. The lack of confidence in participating or reacting on issues in the classroom is the reflection of this cultural norm.

Besides that, Ramli (2010) cited that due to the background influences of the students, Asian students such as in our country prefer a teacher centered approach (Zhu et al, 2009) which serves the Asian cultural practices and values better than the student-centered approach which requires them to question the authority. As a result, from this, students in our school hardly speak up in class (Maziha, 2011) and as a replacement for the responsibility to participate in the classroom, they would rather do activities such as listening and taking notes in order to compensate their lack of involvement in the classroom. Even though this helps to create a more successful learning outcome, teachers need to be aware that the result of adhering completely to a teacher-centered learning environment will sacrifice a teacher's ability to innovate in a classroom (Ameliana, 2017).

Conclusion

The role of teacher in teaching and experimenting with their teaching pedagogies with these passive students are proven to be an essential factor in determining students' participation in class. This is supported through an observation by Lui (2001) who stated that the pattern of learning among Asian students such as our own are not static, as students might be passive in a particular class but active in a different class. This shows how teachers are able to influence and determine the level of participation among passive students and this could be done in various methods. Pawan (1995) stated; teachers' expectations put on a particular student are among the important factors which are able to influence the behavior of these students in the classroom.

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