Implementation of Collaborative Learning in Improving Teachers' Social Competence (Case Study of Teachers of SMPN 2 Darangdan Purwakarta)

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The lack of teachers' social competence has a negative impact on the decline of the image of a pleasant school environment. The purpose of this research is to find and analyze the implementation of collaborative learning that can improve the social competence of teachers of SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan Purwakarta. This research uses a case study approach. The data collection method used participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies on learning community activities. The results of the study show that (1) Collaborative learning that is institutionalized through the forum of Learning Communities (Kombel) and Lesson Study can change the work pattern of teachers that were originally individualistic to more collective; (2) The interaction process in planning and evaluating joint learning significantly hones communication skills, cooperation, and empathy between peers; (3) The main obstacles found were time constraints and schedule adjustments, but the managerial support of the principal was the key to the success of the program. The conclusion of this study is that effective collaborative learning functions as a social laboratory that matures teachers' professional attitudes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the lamp of human civilization derived from four values. namely theological value, metaphysical value, scientific value, and mechanical value (Suharyanto H. Soro, 2024). Human activity, both abstractly and concretely, comes from educational values embedded in the subconscious. Education is the heart of human beings and colors aspects of social and state life. In other words, education is a fundamental element for human beings in order to maintain and develop a progressive life.

The transformation of national education in Indonesia is currently undergoing a fundamental shift in line with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum which demands a change in the work culture of educators. This curriculum positions schools not only as a place for knowledge transfer, but as a dynamic, adaptive, and development-oriented learning ecosystem for the development of the whole human being. In this new framework, the role of teachers becomes crucial not only as classroom managers, but also as social actors responsible for building healthy educational relationships in the school environment.

The success of a teacher in navigating this change in the curriculum depends heavily on the quality of social competence he has. Based on Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, social competence is defined as the ability of educators to communicate and interact effectively with students, fellow educators, parents, and the wider community. Without qualified social skills, the educational process will lose its human dimension and be vulnerable to internal conflicts. In line with this urgency, Dr. Suharyanto H. Soro in his work published in 2014 emphasized that education is essentially a social and cultural process that cannot be separated from human relations. Suharyanto (2014) argues that teachers are not only subjects who teach, but also learning subjects who grow through interaction, dialogue, and reflection with peers. This view emphasizes that the development of teacher professionalism must be directed at the formation of a social space that allows collective learning to occur.

However, the reality in the field often shows a phenomenon that contradicts this idealism, where the work culture of teachers is still dominated by individualistic patterns. Teachers tend to work in isolation in their respective classrooms without active involvement or pedagogic dialogue with peers. This condition of professional isolation, according to Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018), has a bad impact on the stagnation of learning innovation and the weakening of professional solidarity in the school environment.

To address these isolation challenges, collaborative learning is emerging as a highly relevant and urgent approach to implement. Theoretically, this approach is rooted in the theory of *Social Constructivism* developed by Vygotsky (1978), which states that the cognitive and professional development of individuals takes place optimally through social interaction. Through collaboration, knowledge is no longer considered as private property, but rather is built together through dialogue in a meaningful social context. The implementation of collaborative learning in schools is often realized through the formation of *Professional Learning Communities* (PLCs). DuFour (2004) emphasized that the professional learning community focuses its activities on teacher collective learning to improve the quality of instructional practice in the classroom. Forums like these encourage teachers to share good practices, discuss learning barriers, and hone empathy through close cooperation.

One concrete form of this collaborative practice is *Lesson Study*, which involves a process of planning, observation, and reflection together. Catherine Lewis (2002) explained that *Lesson Study* requires open-mindedness and the ability to accept constructive criticism from peers. In a humanistic pedagogic perspective, this process of collective reflection is a means of maturing social and professional attitudes for every educator involved in it. The importance of this social interaction is also highlighted by Suharyanto (2016) who emphasizes that pedagogic collaboration is the main instrument in shaping the ethos of togetherness and collective responsibility. He argued that a healthy school should be able to thrive as a learning community, not just a rigid administrative organization. Therefore, humanistic educational leadership is needed to facilitate healthy social relations between educators.

In the context of school management, the role of the principal as an instructional leader is a determining factor for the success of a collaborative culture. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) stated that the principal is responsible for creating a climate that supports continuous learning and provides a safe space for teachers to engage in dialogue. Participatory leadership will break down the barriers of seniority and personal ego, so that collaboration can run naturally and productively. SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan in Purwakarta is an interesting research location because this school has gradually adopted a collective work pattern through the Learning Community and *Lesson Study*. This cultural shift from

individualism to collectivism in schools shows that there are real efforts to improve the quality of social relations between educators. As emphasized by Suharyanto (2014), the quality of education in an institution is highly determined by the quality of social interaction in it.

This analysis is important to see the extent to which social laboratories in schools are able to mature teachers' professional attitudes. In closing, the results of this research are expected to make a practical contribution as a reference for other schools in building a professional and humanist work culture. By strengthening social competence through collaboration, teachers will not only become better teachers technically, but also become more empathetic and communicative individuals. This is in line with the spirit of the Independent Curriculum which prioritizes the harmonization of interpersonal relationships in order to improve the quality of educational services for students.

2. METHODS

This research uses a case study approach. Suharyanto H. soro (2023) defines a case study as a scientific activity carried out consciously, both single and plural problems using observational data collection methods, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation or the like so that it can describe and exploit the findings comprehensively and in-depth. which aims to gain a deep understanding of social phenomena in the natural context in schools. The choice of approach is based on the thinking of Creswell (2016) who states that this method is effective for exploring the meaning of social or humanitarian problems, especially the interaction of teachers' social competencies. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to capture the subjective reality of how collaborative learning is internalized without manipulating variables in the field.

The research strategy used is a descriptive case study to provide a detailed overview of a particular unit of analysis. According to Yin (2018), the design of a case study is particularly appropriate when the research question requires an explanation of the "how" or "why" of a series of contemporary events over which the researcher has little control. The researcher in-depth investigated the implementation of Community Learning and *Lesson Study* as an instrument for improving teachers' interpersonal competence.

In line with the view of Suharyanto (2014), research methods in the pedagogic context must be able to touch the social and cultural dimensions that surround human relations in schools. This is because teachers are not only teaching subjects, but also learning subjects who grow through interaction and reflection together. Therefore, the research procedure is designed to photograph the social spaces that allow such collective learning to occur.

The presence of researchers in the field acts as a key instrument that is directly involved in the data collection process. Referring to the opinion of Sugiyono (2019), in qualitative research, researchers must have sensitivity to capture the meaning behind human behavior and build good relationships with informants. The researcher positions himself as a limited participant observer to maintain objectivity while still gaining full access to learning community activities.

The determination of data sources or informants is carried out through *purposive sampling techniques* to obtain rich information and in accordance with the research objectives. The researcher chose the informants who were considered the most knowledgeable and directly involved, namely the principal as the instructional manager and the teachers who were active in *the Lesson Study activities*. This is in line with the criteria of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) that the selection of qualitative samples should be oriented to the depth of information, not to statistical representations.

The main data collection technique is carried out through *in-depth interviews* which are semi-structured. This interview was designed to explore teachers' perceptions of changes in their attitudes and communication skills after engaging in collective work patterns. According to Creswell (2016), qualitative interviews allow researchers to obtain historical data and understand the perspectives of participants broadly, so that the dynamics of empathy can be clearly mapped.

In addition to interviews, this study used limited participatory observation techniques to strengthen the validity of the data. Observations were made directly on the interaction of teachers in

formal and informal discussion forums during joint learning planning. Through these observations, researchers can see in real terms how the process of negotiation and assertive communication takes place among educators during collaborative activities. Documentation studies were also carried out on meeting minutes, teacher reflection journals, and photos of learning community activities. The combination of these various data sources is a form of triangulation of sources and methods that is very crucial in case study research. According to Yin (2018), triangulation serves to ensure the validity and credibility of research findings so that the data produced is objective and accountable.

Data analysis is carried out in a flowing manner from the time data collection begins until the research report is completed. This analysis process follows an interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes three simultaneous flow of activities, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Data reduction was carried out by sorting out raw data related to teachers' social competence which was then presented in the form of a descriptive narrative. In the process of presenting data, the researcher grouped findings based on patterns of behavior change from individualist to collective systematically. The researcher also verifies the data continuously during the research process to ensure the consistency of the findings. This step is important to see how effective collaborative learning serves as a social laboratory that matures teachers' professional attitudes.

To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher conducted a credibility test through extended observations and peer discussions. According to Sugiyono (2019), re-checking data with informants (*member checking*) is also carried out to ensure that the description prepared by the researcher is in accordance with what the informant feels. This procedure is carried out at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan to maintain the authenticity of the teachers' experience in the program. This entire series of methodological procedures is expected to provide a solid conclusion regarding the effectiveness of collaborative learning. The researcher ensures that every stage, from the selection of informants to the analysis of the data, is carried out with the principle of scientific prudence. The end result aims to provide practical recommendations for schools in building a professional and humanist collaborative culture.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of research at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan show that the implementation of collaborative learning has become the main catalyst in the transformation of teachers' social competence. Collaborative learning in this context is no longer seen as just an instructional method in the classroom, but has shifted into a fundamental collective work culture. This transformation marks a new awareness among educators about the importance of interpersonal relationships in achieving educational goals.

Through the Learning Community (Kombel) forum, teachers in the school began to abandon sectoral egos and isolated teaching practices. This change in behavior is crucial considering the challenges of the Independent Curriculum which demands high flexibility and adaptability. By breaking down the barriers of individualism, teachers begin to build the foundation of trust that is a key requirement for healthy professional collaboration.

This phenomenon of change is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of Social Constructivism, especially the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. In the context of teacher professional development, social interaction between peers allows an educator to achieve a higher level of pedagogical understanding than if they were working independently. Learning from others becomes an effective method to patch up the lack of individual competence through collective strength. Suharyanto (2014) emphasized that education is essentially a social process that cannot be separated from the dynamics of human relations. In his view, teachers are not only subjects who transfer knowledge, but also learning subjects who grow through dialogue and reflection together. The findings at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan prove that the dialogue spaces created in collaboration have significantly matured teachers' social attitudes.

Empirically, the strengthening of social competence in the research site is evident from the increasing frequency and quality of assertive communication between teachers. This assertive communication allows teachers to convey ideas or obstacles without feeling inferior or attacking others. This communication skill is a key pillar in the social competency standards that every professional educator must have. In the Lesson Study forum, researchers observed that teachers no longer felt intimidated or threatened when they received input from peers. This practice shows an increase in emotional maturity in accepting criticism as part of efforts to improve the quality of learning. Openness to feedback is an important indicator of the social confidence that is beginning to grow among teachers.

Communication between teachers has now shifted from just informal conversations that are surface to in-depth and substantial professional discussions. They began to discuss learning strategies, classroom management, and student character with a more analytical perspective. This proves that the collaborative environment serves as a training medium for teachers to hone their interpersonal skills. The work pattern that was originally individualistic is now gradually fading and is being replaced by the spirit of collectivity in learning planning. Teachers routinely take the time to discuss to develop teaching modules together to create material continuity. This co-drafting process requires negotiation and compromise skills that are an integral part of social competence.

The need for synchronization of teaching modules forces teachers to practice tolerance and the ability to listen to the opinions of others attentively. It is not uncommon for differences of opinion to occur regarding the order of the material or evaluation method, but it is resolved through deliberation. The ability to manage these differences shows that teachers have reached a stage of maturity in organizing professionally. Johnson & Johnson (1999) explained that in cooperative and collaborative learning, there is a principle of positive interdependence. This principle compels each individual to contribute to the maximum for the success of the group or school organization as a whole. This awareness of dependency makes teachers more concerned about the performance of their peers, because the success of the school is a mutual success.

The aspect of empathy between peers has also experienced a very significant increase through collective reflection activities that are carried out regularly. When one teacher faces obstacles in handling student behavior in class, the other colleagues tend to provide solutions and support without a patronizing impression. This supportive atmosphere creates a warm school climate and is far from the pressure of unhealthy competition. The emotional support created in the school environment has succeeded in building a harmonious and supportive educational ecosystem. The stable psychological condition of teachers due to this social support has a direct impact on the way they treat students in the classroom. This shows that social competence is not only a matter of technical communication, but also concerns the depth of emotional maturity in establishing relationships.

This research found that the Learning Community (Kombel) at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan has been well institutionalized as a "social laboratory". In this forum, there is a continuous dialectical process between educational theory and practice in the field. Teachers not only learn about what to teach, but also learn about how to be part of an ethical professional society. In Kombel, there is an exchange of experience (sharing of practice) that is slowly able to break down the rigid limits of seniority. Senior teachers are starting to be open to learning about learning technology from young teachers, while young teachers get pedagogical wisdom from the experience of senior teachers. This cross-generational synergy strengthens interpersonal harmony which is the main foundation of an effective work climate.

The interpersonal harmonization created in this school is in line with the demands of the Independent Curriculum which prioritizes collaboration and student-centered learning. Teachers who are used to working together will find it easier to design integrated cross-disciplinary learning. Thus, improving teachers' social competence automatically supports the implementation of the curriculum in a more optimal and meaningful manner. The implementation of this collaborative learning also has a positive impact on the way teachers interact with parents, students and the wider community. Teachers who have honed their communication skills at school tend to be more skilled in conveying the progress of student development to their parents. The ability to build bridges of communication with outside parties is very important to increase public trust in schools.

Social skills that have been honed in the internal school environment are naturally carried over into social interactions outside the school environment. The image of teachers' professionalism in the eyes of the public increases because they are able to show a polite, empathetic, and communicative attitude. This proves that the development of social competence has a wide domino effect on the credibility of educational institutions. Fullan (2001) stated that meaningful educational changes always involve transforming work culture to be more collaborative. This cultural change will ultimately increase the public accountability of schools because every action of teachers can be held collectively accountable. Collaboration eliminates the sense of excessive ownership over a particular class and replaces it with shared responsibility for the entire student.

Despite showing many positive results, researchers found quite real obstacles in terms of time management and administration. Teachers' busyness in fulfilling teaching loads and administrative tasks often clash with the schedule of regular meetings of the learning community. However, findings on the ground suggest that these structural constraints can be overcome through mutually agreed commitment and schedule flexibility. The ability of teachers to negotiate and find solutions to current problems is a tangible manifestation of the application of social competence. Instead of complaining or withdrawing from the program, they prefer to engage in constructive dialogue in order to find a solution that benefits all parties. Creativity in utilizing intermittent time proves that teachers' internal motivation to develop is very strong.

Managerial support from the principal emerged as a determining factor that determined the success of this entire collaborative program. The principal at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan plays a role not only as an instructor, but also as a facilitator, motivator, and role model in collaborating. A democratic leadership style provides a safe space for teachers to innovate without fear of administrative sanctions. This participatory leadership model has been proven to be able to strengthen the collaborative climate which is the main prerequisite for improving teachers' social competence. Suharyanto (2016) added that humanist educational leadership must be able to facilitate healthy social relations so that schools develop as learning organizations. Without the support of leaders, collaboration between teachers will be difficult to sustain for long and is only a formality.

In a modern pedagogic perspective, teachers' social competence is an important instrument to create an inclusive and child-friendly learning atmosphere. Teachers who have good social relationships with their peers are proven to be calmer and more patient in dealing with the diversity of students' characters. The psychological burden of teachers is reduced because they feel that they have a strong support system in school. The harmony that exists between teachers indirectly provides a positive role model for students in social behavior. Students will observe how their teachers respect each other, work together, and solve problems elegantly. The process of transferring character values occurs not only through subject matter, but through real examples that educators show every day.

This study also highlights that social competence is not an attribute that appears instantaneously, but through a habituation process. The collaborative environment created through Lesson Study provides a stage for teachers to continue to practice accepting differences and managing egos. This process of maturing attitudes is a key finding that shows that teacher development must touch on personality aspects. Each reflection session in collaborative learning is an opportunity for teachers to learn to convey suggestions in polite and non-judgmental language. These constructive feedback skills are needed to maintain emotional stability in a dynamic work environment. This high professionalism attitude will ultimately improve the quality of educational services in an ongoing manner.

Growing cross-subject collaboration allows for the creation of integrated learning projects that are more engaging for students. The success of such a project requires very intensive coordination and qualified conflict management skills at the teacher level. Teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan proved that technical differences can be resolved through healthy and transparent dialogue. The use of information technology, such as digital communication groups, also plays a role in accelerating the flow of information and facilitating coordination without time and space limitations. Polite digital communication is part of the adaptation of teachers' social competence in the current digital era.

Communication ethics in cyberspace are well maintained in order to maintain the harmony of the work environment that has been built.

Overall, the success of the implementation at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan provides strong evidence that the school is able to transform into a learning organization. Senge (in Fullan, 2001) explains that a learner organization is a place where people continue to develop their capacity collectively. Collaboration is the main energy that drives this capacity, with social competence as the lubricant for interaction. As a closing of the discussion, it can be concluded that the synergy between school policies that support collaboration and teachers' awareness to develop is the main key. Improving teachers' social competence through collaborative learning has proven to be effective in maturing the professional attitude of educators. This is a valuable capital for schools to continue to be adaptive and innovative in facing educational challenges in the future.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of collaborative learning at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan has exceeded the fulfillment of curricular obligations, but has become a strategic instrument in reconstructing teachers' social competencies fundamentally. Through the forum of Community Learning (Kombel) and Lesson Study, there is a shift in the work paradigm from an isolative-individualistic pattern to a supportive collective culture. This phenomenon proves that planned professional interaction is able to change the work character of educators to be more open and communicative.

The application of collaborative learning is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of Social Constructivism, which emphasizes that the professional and cognitive development of individuals occurs optimally through social interaction. Social knowledge and skills do not grow in solitude, but rather are built through dialogue and collaboration in the context of a meaningful cultural environment. Schools, in this case, serve as an ecosystem that provides a space for teachers to learn from each other. The results of the analysis showed that intensive interaction in the planning and evaluation of shared learning significantly honed communication skills, cooperation, and empathy among peers. This process forces the teacher to step out of their comfort zone and begin to appreciate the perspective of others in solving pedagogic problems. Assertive communication skills are a real product of the habituation of professional dialogue that is carried out regularly at the school.

This collaborative learning effectively serves as a "social laboratory" that matures teachers' professional attitudes through a process of dialectical and collective reflection. The maturity of this attitude can be seen from the way teachers respond to differences of opinion and criticism that arise during the collaboration process. Teachers no longer see criticism as a personal attack, but rather as a valuable contribution to the growth of mutual professionalism. Although the program substantially succeeded in improving social competence, the study identified that constraints of time constraints and schedule synchronization remain major challenges. Administrative burdens are often a distraction that hinders the consistency of meetings in the learning community. However, these obstacles are not the reason for failure, but rather a test room for teachers' social competence in negotiating. These managerial obstacles have proven to be overcome through strong leadership commitment from the principal. Democratic managerial support is a key variable that ensures the sustainability of the collaborative program at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan. Without the active involvement of the leader as a facilitator, the collaborative culture tends to fade and revert to individualistic patterns.

Theoretically, this study emphasizes that teachers' social competence is not a static attribute, but a capacity that can be continuously developed through a collaborative work ecosystem. The habit of interacting in groups makes the teacher's empathy and tolerance aspects more naturally honed. This proves that the work environment has a big role in shaping the professional character of an educator.

The integration of human values in the social interaction of teachers with the demands of professionalism of the Independent Curriculum creates harmony that has a positive impact on the quality of educational services. Teachers who have good social skills tend to be better able to build

warm and dialogical relationships with their students. The end result is the creation of a more inclusive and enjoyable learning environment for students. This research provides a real portrait that educational transformation must start from the transformation of the work culture of educators. Through collaborative learning, teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Darangdan have proven that togetherness is the key to facing the challenges of the times. This success is expected to be an inspiration for other schools in strengthening teachers' social competence for the advancement of national education.

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