

The Role of Teacher Scaffolding in Increasing Student Group Discussion Motivation

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of learning management in increasing student motivation, especially through the group discussion method, tends to be passive without proper teacher intervention. This study aims to find and analyze the role of teacher scaffolding in increasing the motivation of student group discussions at SMPN 3 Darangdan. The researcher uses a case study approach. The data collection method uses observation, interview, and documentation study methods of school principals, teachers, and grade IX students. The results of the study show that careful planning in mapping students' Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD) as well as the provision of dynamic support (such as hints and encouragement) are significantly able to arouse students' intrinsic motivation and independence. The process of fading or gradually reducing assistance has proven crucial in changing the dynamics of the discussion from passive to active and collaborative. This study concludes that the mastery of scaffolding techniques by teachers is an effective classroom managerial strategy to realize the quality of student-centered learning and in line with the vision of RAMAH at SMPN 3 Darangdan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Modern education in the midst of the current era of digital transformation no longer places educators only as a single distributor of information, but demands a restructuring of the role of learning architects. Within the scope of Education Administration, the effectiveness of the instructional process in the classroom is the main indicator in measuring the success of overall learning management. Based on the theory of social constructivism developed by Vygotsky (1978), optimal learning occurs when students interact within *the Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD). This area is a transition area between the actual abilities of students when working independently and the potential abilities that can be achieved through expert guidance. This is where the group discussion method plays a vital role as a

space for students to build knowledge collaboratively through the negotiation of meaning and dynamic exchange of ideas.

The implementation of a truly effective group discussion relies heavily on the presence of guidance or *scaffolding* provided by the teacher in a timely manner. Theoretically, Wood et al. (1976) define *scaffolding* as a form of dynamic instructional support, including the provision of instruction, encouragement, and modeling that are tailored to the specific needs of students. This support is not static or given forever, but rather must be gradually reduced as the student's competence and confidence increase, a process known as *fading*. Administratively, teachers are required to have professional competence in managing time and resources in the classroom so that each group gets the right portion of guidance to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation in the problem-solving process. In the reality that occurs in the field, it often shows that there is a wide *gap* between these theoretical demands and daily learning practices.

Many teachers are still stuck in the narrow understanding that group discussions mean giving students complete freedom without the need for targeted intervention or supervision. This condition often causes the discussion process to be unproductive and lose the essence of learning. As a result, there is domination by a handful of students who have higher abilities, while other students experience demotivation and are passive or often referred to as the phenomenon of *social loafing*. The teacher's inability to provide strategic *scaffolding* interventions results in instructional objectives failing to be achieved evenly.

This gap is further exacerbated by a decrease in students' motivation to collaborate because they feel a loss of direction and support when facing complex tasks. Without the presence of teachers as active guides, the challenges in group discussions turn into a burdensome burden for students who do not have strong learning independence. This shows that the role of teachers in providing assistance should not be ignored, but must be formulated intelligently so as not to kill students' creativity. Failure to provide this support has a direct impact on the quality of interaction between students which becomes superficial and does not lead to in-depth concept discovery.

Managerially, the low motivation for this discussion is also triggered by the lack of academic supervision that focuses on the development of teachers' pedagogical techniques in the classroom. Many educators still adopt a class leadership style that tends to be rigid or too permissive, creating an unstable learning climate. According to Schunk & DiBenedetto (2020), students' motivation will increase significantly if they feel supported and have high self-efficacy for the assigned tasks. The teacher's lack of understanding of how to provide appropriate guidance causes students to feel anxious when facing intellectual difficulties, which then triggers boredom and apathy towards group work.

This phenomenon reflects the failure of classroom management in creating a learning climate conducive to the growth of students' potential collectively. Effective classroom management should be able to facilitate individual needs amidst group dynamics without sacrificing any of them. Teachers who are less skilled at delivering *scaffolding* tend to leave the struggling group trapped in frustration, while the proficient group is left without new challenges. This imbalance makes educational services at the classroom level not optimal and does not meet the standards of learning quality expected in the framework of modern education administration.

Based on this urgency, an in-depth study is needed on how the role of teacher *scaffolding* can be reformulated to motivate student group discussions systematically. This research is very important to provide insight for educational administration practitioners and teachers about the importance of balancing student autonomy with measurable guidance. By understanding effective *scaffolding* mechanisms, teachers can design interventions that not only help students complete assignments, but also build independent character and responsibility in learning. This is the main key in realizing student-centered learning management.

It is important to emphasize that *proper scaffolding* will provide a sense of psychological security for students to dare to try and make mistakes without feeling judged. An emotionally safe environment is an absolute prerequisite for the growth of sustainable learning motivation. When students realize that teacher help is available when they are completely stuck, they will be more courageous to explore

new ideas that are more risky and creative. This is the essence of the transformation of the teacher's role from just a material giver to a facilitator who inspires and guides students' intellectual growth in a humanistic manner.

It is hoped that through this research, schools can improve the quality of their instructional services as a whole so that the group discussion process is no longer seen as a mere administrative formality. Group discussions should be at the heart of classroom learning activities that truly impact the development of students' competencies in an authentic way. The success of teachers in implementing *scaffolding* will be a tangible proof of high professional competence in managing classroom dynamics. Ultimately, improving the quality of interaction in the classroom will directly contribute to improving the quality of graduates and the reputation of the educational unit as a whole.

The formulation of *a strong scaffolding* role will be the foundation for the creation of a collaborative and innovative learning culture at SMPN 3 Darangdan. Focusing on student motivation is a crucial first step to ensuring that each learner is actively involved in their own knowledge-building process. Through the synergy between careful planning, the implementation of appropriate guidance, and continuous evaluation, it is hoped that the goal of national education to produce an independent and competent generation can be achieved more effectively.

2. METHODS

This research uses a case study approach. The reason for choosing this approach refers to the view of Creswell (2016) who states that issues such as the role of teachers and motivation are dynamic social phenomena, so their understanding must be explored through the meaning and real experiences of the perpetrators, not just statistical measurements. The method applied is a qualitative descriptive method. The researcher chose this method with the aim of presenting a complete portrait of the actual situation that occurred at SMPN 3 Darangdan. In line with the opinion of Moleong (2017), the descriptive method allows researchers to delineate every small detail of the teacher's strategy and student interaction in the classroom narratively, resulting in rich and meaningful data. Suharyanto H. Soro (2023) researcher as a Key Instrument (*Human Instrument*), in contrast to quantitative which relies on questionnaires, in qualitative, analytical acuity, empathy, and the presence of researchers in the field are determinants of data quality.

Another reason for the use of the descriptive method is its ability to analyze problems that are contemporary or happening today. This is in line with the view of Arikunto (2019) who explains that descriptive research aims to describe the state of a phenomenon in the current situation systematically. Thus, researchers can provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of learning management in the school. In collecting data, researchers use researchers to apply observation techniques or direct observation. The reason for using observation, as emphasized by Arikunto (2019), is to see directly the behavior of the subject in his natural environment. Through this method, researchers can *cross-check* what the teacher says during the interview and what they actually practice in the classroom in real life.

These observations are focused on specific behaviors, such as the moment when the teacher gives clues or when the teacher starts to reduce the help (*fading*). By observing directly, researchers can capture students' emotional moods and spontaneous responses that are often implicit and not revealed in interviews. The presence of researchers in the classroom provides highly accurate primary data on the dynamics of the group discussions that take place.

The third method that is no less important is the study of documents. The researcher chose this technique for the reason of obtaining authentic data that is administrative in nature as a reinforcement of physical evidence. Documents such as Teaching Modules, lesson plans, and educational report cards were analyzed to see the synchronization between the plans prepared by the teacher and the implementation in the field, in accordance with the principle of documentation described by Lincoln & Guba (1985).

Structured interview method. The reason for choosing a structured technique is to ensure that the information unearthed remains consistent and does not expand to other irrelevant topics. According to

Sugiyono (2018), structured interviews make it easier for researchers to process data because the research focus on the POAC management function and *scaffolding techniques* has been maintained through standard question guides. The list of questions in the interview was deliberately adapted from the Regulation of the Director General of GTK Number 4831 of 2023 concerning educator competency standards. The reason for using this legal foundation is so that the research instrument has a strong content validity and is in accordance with national pedagogical standards. The use of this regulation provides a legal and professional basis for researchers to assess the extent to which teacher assistance is carried out in accordance with applicable rules.

The research instruments prepared include observation sheets and interview guides that have been tested for relevance. This instrument functions as a control tool for researchers so that during the data collection process in schools it remains in the corridor of problem limits. This is in line with the principle of Arikunto (2019) that a good instrument is a tool that is able to capture data appropriately without distortion from the interests of researchers outside of the research objective. The location of the research was determined at SMPN 3 Darangdan, Purwakarta, by involving the principal, teachers, and students as primary data sources. The reason for the selection of these diverse sources is to apply the principle of source triangulation. By involving various perspectives from various parties, researchers can obtain a broad and objective point of view, so that the validity of the data produced can be scientifically accounted for.

Meanwhile, to analyze the data, the researcher used a qualitative narrative analysis technique. The main reason is to look for patterns, similarities, and differences in information found in the field. Like the model of Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014), researchers want to assemble these field facts into a logical scientific story about learning management and student learning motivation that is successfully built through teacher intervention. In the final stage of data analysis, the researcher conducts a review of all management functions, from planning to follow-up evaluation results. This is done in accordance with the managerial cycle so that the conclusions drawn really answer the research problems completely. Through this systematic procedure, it is hoped that the research can prove how much influence *scaffolding* has in improving the quality of group discussions at SMPN 3 Darangdan.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

SMPN 3 Darangdan is a medium-level educational institution strategically located on Jalan Raya Sawit – Bojong KM 03, Darangdan District, Purwakarta Regency. Under the auspices of the Purwakarta Regency Education Office, the school, which was established in 1997, has achieved accreditation A. In the 2025-2026 school year, this school manages around 669 students divided into 16 study groups by implementing the Independent Curriculum as its learning standard. In carrying out its function, SMPN 3 Darangdan has a very clear vision, namely "The realization of FRIENDLY students (Religious, Trusted, Independent, Active, and Humanist)". This vision is the school's commitment to shaping the character of students who are not only academically superior but also have noble values.

To realize this vision, the school has set a series of systematic missions. The mission includes the application of religious values in every learning process, the cultivation of honesty and responsibility, the formation of a person who is not dependent on others, increasing the activity of learning, and the development of a sense of concern for fellow humans. The school also formulated strategic goals to support the educational mission within SMPN 3 Darangdan. The main focus of this goal is to create devotion to God, build honest character that can be trusted, form competent individuals who are able to work together, encourage achievement in various fields ranging from science to art, and ensure that all students receive fair and comprehensive educational services.

This research is designed to take an in-depth picture of how the provision of *scaffolding techniques* by teachers can trigger students' enthusiasm in group discussions. Through the case study approach, the researcher directly observed the interactions that occurred in the classroom and conducted in-depth questions and answers with teachers and students. The main focus of this process is to understand the

dynamics of providing teacher assistance and its impact on changes in student learning behavior during discussion activities.

Findings from the field show that teachers routinely use *scaffolding strategies* in guiding group discussions. The role of the teacher here is more as a facilitator who provides timely assistance without dominating the course of the students' conversation. The teacher starts by giving general instructions, then does a close monitoring before deciding when is the right time to provide additional help. When the discussion seemed to be stuck with ideas, the teacher was present to provide encouragement in the form of questions that triggered thoughts, gave appreciation, and straightened out erroneous concepts so that students would return to the right track. The interesting thing is that teachers consciously reduce this assistance as students' understanding increases. This pattern confirms the application of *the fading* technique, where support is pulled slowly so that students can achieve independence in solving problems.

The form of intervention carried out ranged from asking open-ended questions to provoke critical power, giving appreciation as a form of moral support, to clarifying concepts to correct misunderstandings. In addition, teachers also provide real examples of how to communicate well (modeling) and withdraw assistance gradually when the group is considered able to walk on their own.

The results of the observation also noted that there was a surge in motivation in students after they received guidance through *scaffolding*. Students who previously tended to be silent began to dare to speak up, respond to their peers' ideas, and be actively involved in completing tasks together. The atmosphere of the discussion became more lively and focused because students felt more confident with the measurable support from the teacher. From observation, there is an increase in motivation, which can be seen from the increased courage to express opinions and high enthusiasm during the learning process. Cooperation between group members is also more solid with a clear division of roles. The perseverance of students in completing assignments and the emergence of independent learning show that they are no longer completely dependent on the teacher's direction.

Providing initial stimuli and examples of how to argue have proven to be effective in making students feel safer and more comfortable participating. This supportive classroom environment eliminates students' fear of wrongdoing, allowing them to bring out their best potential in group work.

Another impact of this technique is the fostering of a sense of collective responsibility within the group. With the slow reduction of teacher intervention, students are forced to support each other and rely on the abilities of their own teams. This proves that *scaffolding* is not only a teaching technique, but also a tool to build independent character in learning.

Through interviews, teachers revealed that the first step they took was to map students' basic abilities through diagnostic assessments. Information about students' learning styles and social character is crucial so that the assistance provided can be right on target. This strategy is indeed designed to hone critical thinking, practice cooperation, and foster independence through constructive feedback. Discussions are conducted in diverse (heterogeneous) groups so that students can exchange perspectives and learn from each other. During this process, the teacher uses visual media and open-ended questions to guide the student's reasoning flow without providing an instant answer, which is then reduced as the student progresses. Teachers feel the real impact of the application of this method, where students become more initiative and active in discussions because they feel supported according to their respective capacities. The feeling of being accompanied but still given space to think for themselves makes students feel more appreciated in the learning process.

Teachers judge the success of this method by how actively students are involved and how well they are able to complete group challenges. The results of this assessment are then used to refine the teaching strategy at the next meeting, with the final goal so that students can really discuss independently through continuous reflection. Overall, the teacher emphasized that *scaffolding* is the key to keeping students' motivation high when facing difficult tasks. By giving clues instead of direct answers, teachers encourage students to be solution finders. The principle of justice is also put forward by adjusting the level of assistance for each group that has a different level of difficulty.

From the student's point of view, group discussion activities are considered a very fun method and able to drive away boredom. For them, discussing is a valuable opportunity to communicate with friends and gain new insights from various ideas that arise. This creates an interactive learning atmosphere and strengthens the climate of cooperation between students. Students find it very helpful when the teacher gives trigger questions or tips to make their ideas easier for others to understand. The role of teachers who provide guidance when discussions are stuck are highly appreciated by students because they make the learning process clearer and more directed without burdening their thoughts.

The support provided by teachers has been proven to eliminate the fear that students will make mistakes, so that they are more courageous to speak up. The sense of security created by teachers becomes an important foundation for students to start exploring their ideas more broadly. Interestingly, when the teacher began to reduce his help, students felt hesitant and nervous at first. However, these feelings turn into a sense of pride and joy when they realize that they are able to complete tasks independently and establish good communication with their peers.

Based on data obtained from respondents, the presence of teachers as companions provides a strong moral boost for them. The appreciation given by the teacher makes students feel appreciated, while systematic direction makes the purpose of the discussion easier to achieve and understand by all group members. The analysis of the results of the study shows that *the scaffolding technique* carried out by teachers at SMPN 3 Darangdan is in line with the theory of *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*. Teachers succeed in positioning themselves as more *knowledgeable figures (More Knowledgeable Other)* who guide students to penetrate the limits of their abilities to achieve higher learning independence.

At the planning stage, the teacher's steps in mapping the characteristics of students proved to be the key to the success of providing assistance. With a well-thought-out plan, teachers can determine when to enter to provide assistance and when to withdraw proportionally. The compatibility between the assistance provided and the level of difficulty faced by students makes the learning process very effective. In classroom organization, the formation of heterogeneous groups is a smart strategy to trigger healthy social interactions. The use of supporting media such as worksheets also helps to organize the flow of the discussion so that students are not confused. This creates a neat discussion structure while still providing space for students to explore.

During the implementation in the classroom, teachers flexibly use various guidance techniques that are adapted to the ongoing group dynamics. The positive impact is evident in increased student motivation, confidence, and cooperation. This justifies the theory that proper support will strengthen students' self-confidence in completing challenging tasks.

The evaluation process carried out by teachers proves that the quality of student interaction has increased drastically after the *scaffolding* intervention. More equitable participation within the group showed that this method was successful in suppressing the dominance of certain students. These findings reinforce previous studies that suggest that stepwise tutoring is key to active learning engagement. As a final step, teachers conduct continuous reflection to ensure that the assistance provided does not spoil students, but rather becomes more independent. *Scaffolding* has transformed from just a teaching tool to a consistent classroom management approach in building the quality of discussions. Thus, the quality of student interaction and independence can continue to be maintained through measurable and continuous guidance.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the description (data and discussion) that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the application of *scaffolding* techniques by teachers is a very effective learning managerial strategy to trigger motivation and active involvement of students in group discussions. In this context, teachers succeed in carrying out their role as facilitators who provide gradual and balanced learning support, which ultimately creates a conducive, safe, and upholding the value of justice for all students. This approach has been proven not only to hone thinking skills or cognitive aspects, but also to have a real

psychological impact on learning motivation, quality of social interaction, and students' enthusiasm levels during the collaboration process.

More specifically, the implementation of *scaffolding* at SMPN 3 Darangdan is realized through various forms of tactical intervention that are adjusted to class dynamics. Teachers provide assistance in the form of guiding questions to provoke reason, provide appreciation as mental reinforcement, and clarify concepts so that students' understanding does not deviate. In addition, teachers also provide examples through modeling polite and effective communication methods, which are then followed by the process of *fading* or reducing assistance systematically along with the increase in competence and independence shown by students.

The presence of *this scaffolding* has proven to be a bridge for students to overcome learning obstacles that are difficult for them to face alone, while building a strong foundation of confidence when it comes to presenting ideas in front of their peers. The key to success in this process is the teacher's ability to stay behind the scenes without taking over or dominating the course of the group discussion. Thus, students' autonomy in building their own knowledge is maintained, while teachers still ensure that the planned instructional goals can be achieved optimally.

The positive impact of this gradual guidance is evident in the increase in student motivation as measured through several indicators of real behavior in the classroom. Students show greater courage in expressing opinions, high enthusiasm when carrying out instructions, and more solid cooperation between group members. The perseverance in completing complex tasks and the growing initiative to study independently are evidence that their motivation has evolved from simply following orders to a learning awareness oriented towards personal progress.

The effectiveness of group discussions in schools is highly dependent on the professional competence of teachers in managing the provision of proportionate and targeted assistance. *Scaffolding* that is carried out continuously and based on accurate mapping of student needs has been proven to be able to change the learning culture from being passive to dynamic and collaborative. This emphasizes that the success of classroom management is not determined by how many teachers give answers, but rather how accurately teachers provide help so that students are able to find their own answers.

Through synergy between competent teachers, active students, strong school support, and in-depth further research, it is hoped that the quality of national education can continue to be improved in a more transformative direction. The implementation of *scaffolding* strategies that are integrated with the local wisdom value system is expected not only to produce intellectually intelligent students, but also students who have an independent mentality and superior character according to the demands of the times. Thus, the educational process will be a meaningful journey for all parties involved in it.

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