The Importance of Student-centered Learning (SCL) in Indonesian Higher Education

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Abstract

The issue investigated in this paper is about the importance of Student-centered Learning (SCL) in Indonesian higher educations. In some Indonesian universities, the policy to implement SCL has been instructed, but some lecturers seem to teach passively and simply leave the class after finishing their lecture. There are also some arguments from education experts opposing the existence of SCL. Hence, this paper aims to elaborate the benefits of SCL in Indonesian Higher Educations by considering its challenges. As what Angele Attard upholds that Student-centered Learning is generally defined as an approach to concentrate more on students than teachers and to substitute traditional teaching method with active learning, comprehensive self-paced learning activities and/or teamwork development, fundamentally let the students take responsibility for their own learning. The methodology used in this article is the literature review. Selecting a review topic assisted by some kinds of literature from peer-reviewed journal articles through Monash University database, Google Scholar and some websites containing Indonesian higher education data and evidence. As the findings, there are three main benefits of SCL; it provides an opportunity for students to have Independent learning, encourages students to collaboratively work in a group and actively involves them in critical thinking activities. In summary, this paper shows that the implementation of SCL in Indonesian higher education will play important role and help provide opportunities for students to actively study and think out of the box.

Keywords: Student-centered Learning, Higher Education, Teaching Practice, Indonesian Education.

Introduction

The importance of active learning is mainly discussed to promote the activeness of student in learning activities. As part of it, in this essay, I will critically evaluate the importance of Student-centred Learning (SCL) to be implemented in Indonesian higher educations. In particular, this paper will examine how SCL gives more advantages, consider the challenges, and evaluate SCL for students in their learning activity.

Student-centered Learning is generally defined as an approach where all activities are more concentrated on students than teachers. SCL as a wide pedagogical approach that aims to substitute traditional teaching method with active learning, comprehensive self-paced learning activities and/or teamwork development, fundamentally let the students take responsibility for their own learning in education sector (Attard, Di Iorio, Geven, & Santa, 2010). In some universities in developing countries, the lecturers seem to talk a lot without considering the student collaboration (Harsono, 2008; Saragih & Napitupulu, 2015).

As stated in the beginning of this essay, the importance of SCL is the main focus to be discussed. There are three main benefits of SCL found in relation to Indonesia higher education context. SCL provides an opportunity for students to have Independent learning, actively involves students in critical thinking activity, and encourage them to collaboratively work in a group which enhances their teamwork skill.

I. Higher Education in Indonesia

One-way traffic method occurs within the paradigm of Teacher-centered Learning (TCL). In this paradigm the students tend to be receivers, less instrumental as transformers and / or explorers. In addition, the students get into the situation rote learning, not meaningful learning. Such a situation is reinforced by the conceptual lecture material (Harsono, 2008). Universities in Indonesia considered as the top institutions also face the same problems. The lecturers merely teach their subjects and simply left the class after finishing the lecture. The students only sit along the day and listen to what the lecturers are explaining.

In the context of TCL, the concept of "spoon feeding" for students is no longer appropriate because it makes the learning process slow, and the students do not have the opportunity to choose the appropriate "menu" (Harsono, 2008). The delay in the learning process that occurs in the TCL paradigm will cause learners to always be left behind, unable to immediately adjust to the progress of the times. Hence, to overcome the slowness and backwardness, the learning process needs to be changed, from one-way traffic to two-way traffic and interactive.

To emphasise that SCL should really be implemented, The Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 20 in 2003 on the National Education System also implies the existence of SCL characteristics and "Forecasting of Tri Loka." In Chapter III, Point 4 Paragraph 3 there is provision on the development of education, as follows: "Education is organized as a process of cultivating and analysing the learner that goes on for the rest of the life". Furthermore, in Point 4 paragraph 4 there is a provision as

follows:" Education is conducted by giving exemplary, building willingness, and developing the creativity of learners in the learning process " (Indonesia, 2003).

II. Impact Of SCL Implementation

A. Independent Learning

Independent learning is the first advantage that the students get through learning by SCL. During the activity, the students will work independently without direct guidance from lecturer to the subject. The lecturer will only facilitate and lead them to primary concentration, which is on the demand of the learners rather than on the information to merely be transmitted (Attard et al., 2010). A lot of students seem to not have a strong willingness to study because they do not feel the freedom of learning. Some top universities in Indonesia, for instance, still involve the lecturers who teach almost all subjects by their own rules and regulations without providing the opportunity for students to do the task with their own way (Harsono, 2008). As the result, the students were reluctant and just do the activities and forget them after the semester is completed. Hence, during the independent learning process, the learners will be encouraged to be more responsible for their own learning and interest, and to educate others.

The idea of giving an opportunity for students to understand how to be in charge for their own learning and let them show their own interests is the main goals of independent learning. Each student will also enhance the capacity to analyze and elaborate their issues which they investigate in order to build strategies for their improvement and know how to solve their problems. If the learners go with their own choices within the lesson given, they will encourage themselves to move and work effectively. In addition, what a facilitator does during the learning activity is to supervise the environment so that each learner can learn their own way and timing (McCabe & O'Connor, 2014). Nowadays, the unrealised mistake is that teachers tend to find themselves helping as soon as the students have a problem. That intemperate assistances make students passive to think for themselves and let them keep relying on someone else. Students who have an active facilitator rather than a passive facilitator will result self-improvement for a great work (Attard et al., 2010). When the lecturers give opportunity for students to work with their own interest, it can also make the students recognize their capability and more realize their own strengths and weaknesses (McCabe & O'Connor, 2014). Hence, by applying independent learning, the students will work more freely and enjoy the learning activity with their own way and interest.

B. Teamwork

In addition to shaping independent learning, collaborative work among students is also encouraged in SCL. The classroom is set up to let the students work in a group, and activity will involve interaction and sharing among other students to demonstrate effective collaboration in a classroom. Teamwork generally urges learners to have the primary skills related to learning as a collective unit to achieve the goal (a Brush, 1997). It is stated that the learners will have the capability to work together effectively and work in cooperation to enhance their social skills.

As the group work, doing the tasks together is fundamentally necessary. They can all purpose opinion and come up with conclusions together. The students do not only learn by working through the group assignment, but they also learn by giving explanation of their reasoning and thinking processes to other friends in group (a Brush, 1997). Moreover, group work activity also helps encourage group brainstorming, reasoning and problem-solving ability and let the learners understand how to use evaluation skills and critical thinking as a team. A collaborative group work will even distribute the responsibilities, blast through the material and cover more ground than if they do the individual task or homework.

C. Critical Thinking

Besides collaborative work, Student-centered Learning also gives an opportunity to students to think critically. The facilitator will propose some complex problems to be investigated, and the learners are encouraged to actively participate by questioning, arguing and debating. They will enhance students' knowledge to understand the given subject more deeply. Critical thinking also involves the core of Problem-based Learning (PBL), which is necessary for students to understand how to learn critically and analytically (Hannafin, Hill, & Land, 1997). Hence, there are two main important points that students can get during the learning activity which involves critical thinking.

Firstly, the students learn how to take action in assessing complex issues. They will be urged to improve their own ways to find out solutions to problems that they encounter in a collaborative strategy. Developing precise thinking, deep analysis, and reasoned deliberation is the goal of implementing PBL in Student-centred Learning activity (Attard et al., 2010). Attard thinks that the basis of the capacity for critical assessment and analysis emerges as fundamental for enjoying a good quality of the educational environment (Attard et al., 2010). Therefore, having critical thinking and implementing their study in education contexts, students are able to think broader and deeper, find out solutions of the given problem context, use their reasoning skills to analyse and evaluate the assignment, and have strategic thought and not just take something for granted.

The second point is the student will use a wide variety of resources during assessing the complex issues. Critical thinking encourages learners to evaluate their own habit and thinking and on problems in variety of sectors in order to produce reasonable decisions, counter and take action whether it is individually or collectively (Saragih & Napitupulu, 2015). Besides, Saragih and Napitupulu also uphold that by using varied references the students will be able to enhance their knowledge, so they will find more issues to be investigated and analyzed critically. Hence, learners will be more well informed and figure out the notions that are needed, functional and powerful (Saragih & Napitupulu, 2015) .

III. Challenges of Implementation

Some critiques point drawbacks of SCL. Many students seem to be failed in the class because they keep going on with their own mistakes and have no boundaries to limit their action (Bailey, 2008). Consequently, the students do not acquire any effective lesson from the class. In addition, one of the requirements of independent learning is

the skill to work on their own, with a minimum guide and with confidence. This condition will disadvantage the student with low thinking ability, therefore, they could experience all of the steps psychologists associate with trauma. Moreover, the students with high thinking ability would feel more grief to play a major role when they are instructed to take duty for their own study, especially when they have been studying in a traditional classroom for a long time in their formal education. Hence, there will be inequality during the learning activities.

To challenge those assumptions, SCL does not mean that the tutors do nothing. The teacher obligation is to facilitate the student's goals. They investigate and provide needed resources, create, select, and expand problem contexts, while demonstrating a human resource (Hannafin et al., 1997). SCL is classified by a continuous cooperation teachers and students where all participants are actively get enrolled in discussion in the process of learning. It is also better to include digital resources like computerized databases, data collection and analysis tools, or internet-based resources (UGM, Maret 2007). Resources may also be useful to help the teachers with building a context for the student-centered class activity, or for developing an essential structure or marking rubric for performance assessment on the activity.

Student-centred Learning makes students learn more effectively. Even though this will need more patience and confidence, encouraging the students to concentrate fully on the activity would make them understand the lesson by implementing their own interest but guided by the lecturers. More importantly, the students cannot acquire the independent learning if their teachers still play more major role during the learning activity by including formative feedback that aims to give students a clarity of what they should do to have better improvement (Nanney, 2004). This feedback urges the learners to be more independent since it lets them manage their own learning. To enhance their working activity, one of the ways which are crucial to be included is critical thinking activity which is considered as the second advantage of SCL and will be elaborated on the next point.

On the collaboration point of view, much research focusing on cooperative study group suggests that students cannot be put into a group together without detailed structures in certain place. The structures include positive interdependence, individual accountability, group goals and rewards, and most importantly in the case of Student-centered learning, methods for providing students with opportunities to learn and practice group management and decision-making skills (Schaefer & Zygmont, 2003) (Bailey, 2008). Besides, the students who have high order thinking ability will play more major role in group and show their individualism. With collaborative work in group, some learners will respond inappropriately, reject the improvement and the individual responsibility involved, keep complaining the other without considering their mistakes and wasting time explaining to the slower learners in the group (Schaefer & Zygmont, 2003). The students with passive thinking will not get a chance to participate, and they will not get significant improvement in the learning activity.

On the other side, providing proper training for students will be much helpful to result in effective cooperation and experience in cooperative and collaborative skills which are needed to enhance the teamwork skill. The role of the instructor in SCL is to facilitates every single student or in a cooperative team by providing problem-based context, controlling the time limits, demonstrate various amounts of guidance, asking

leading inquiries, selecting response of students, or giving positive feedbacks (UI, January 2016). The teacher also determines when the focus of discussion changed or the discussion ended. Cooperative groups totally explore open-ended problems needing critical and often creative thinking, and teamwork activity also gives the chance for group work and social interaction. Directed circumstances concentrate on the fundamental aspect as analyzed by the instructor and which are explained externally through practice and explicit teaching activities. In workplace, it is also required to have teamwork skill in order to make the work effectively with other people, have string leadership, and know when should be a follower.

From those explanations, it can be stated that teamwork is a great change and gets the students out of their seats. The assignment is more rewarding and enjoyable when the students are incorporated in teamwork exercises. Just to ensure that teachers define some teamwork limitations before starting the group work. The students should understand what they need to achieve, knowing when they should finish their task and how much time they need for doing the task (Harsono, 2008). The teamwork introduces varied skills that will be useful for students later in the workplace, such as communication, collective effort, and negotiation.

On the lecturer side, in critical thinking activity, it is more challenging for the lecturer to manage the class because the learners are really diverse in their skills, weaknesses, and learning styles, but lecturers are just as diverse in their abilities and areas of expertise (Bailey, 2008). The teachers are occasionally confused because they do not really know how to handle the varied skills of students. As a result, they would not enjoy their teaching activity since they have complex materials to provide to students. There would also be an imbalance among the students in the class since the students' abilities are different to each other, so only the smartest one who will more participate in the learning activity.

What is important in SCL is that the role of lecturers is not only to tell them but also guide them to understand the lesson. The instructor who teach patiently and confidently will gain the rewards such as having students who study harder and have better manners towards their lessons, friends and themselves. In addition, providing SCL training will help the teachers to understand the concept and to have better preparation before getting involved in SCL class. In Indonesian University, for instance, the lecturers of chemical engineering faculty in 2008 conducted the seminar of SCL for lecturers because the academic staffs of the university were aware of students need of active learning (UI, January 2016). The seminar also encouraged the lecturers to be more active in teaching by providing problem-based context. In addition to assumption rebuttals, Saragih and Napitupulu in their investigation depict that improving the critical thinking analysis especially in finding mathematical problem solving, mathematical communication and mathematical concept will bring positive improvement of students' thinking ability (Saragih & Napitupulu, 2015). By critical analysis, the student will acquire more ways to develop their ability of high order thinking by not just work individually but also work collaboratively with their friends in group.

IV. Conclusion

In summary, Student-centered Learning truly plays important role in education especially at higher education level in the Indonesian context. Having investigated this issue, this essay shows that the implementation of SCL will help provide an opportunity for students to have Independent learning, boost them to actively engage in critical thinking activity and encourage them to collaboratively work in group which enhances their teamwork skill. Further, Student-centered Learning implementation also leads to some suggestions and recommendations for the student learning improvement. More concern for the supplementary assistances needed by instructors as they demonstrate more efforts to apply these kinds of activities in their own teaching method. Moreover, the most considerable aspect is that helping the students to activate their intellectual development by engaging them in each activity to work and enjoy their learning process. Therefore, as Kincheloe said, in the future, the teachers will not always be considered as the experts who have all of the answers and the students will not be the empty vessel who only passively absorb information and experiences given by the teachers (Kincheloe, 2008).

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