

REVITALIZING THE USE OF CAPTAIN'S DIARY TO INCREASE POSITIVE PEER INTERACTION

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Abstract

As learners learn at school, they have much opportunity to work and play with each other. When this kind of interaction occurs, they learn to trust, care, and respect their peers. These kind of positive interactions can build friendship and increase positive climate in a classroom. It was found at the fourth grade of Muhammadiyah Program Khusus Elementary School Surakarta that many learners have difficulty to interact positively with their peers. To solve the problem, the team revitalized the use of *Captain's Diary*. An exploratory research which was conducted as the preliminary research of here was conducted to describe: a) the procedure of using *Captain's Diary* to increase the learners' positive peer interaction, and b) the positive interaction occurred among the peers. The informants of the study were 30 fourth grade learners and two classroom teachers. To analyze the data, the writers employed Mile and Huberman's Model of Descriptive Interactive comprising three steps, namely data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion/verification. The results showed that a) the *Captain's Diary* was implemented following these steps: a) voting for a captain, b) writing the diary, c) discussing a problem found, d) sharing the results of the discussion with the rest of the class, b) learners learn to interact positively.

Keywords: Captain's Diary, learners' positive interaction

INTRODUCTION

For young learners, school is a place where they learn and play. The place is needed to develop their cognitive and social aspects. During a day, they spend their time at the place to collaborate, solve problems, share feeling and emotion. In the process of learning at school, learners need to be immersed in a positive situation with their peers which is characterized by caring, kindness, respect, and trust. Bovey and Strain refer these situation characteristics as positive peer interactions. Literally, interactions can be defined as action on each other; reciprocal action or effect. While positive interactions constitute interactions that take place between peers that are positive in nature and successful for the learners involved. According to Terzian (2012) positive peer relations involve:

1. Cooperative play skills- such as taking turns, sharing, and responding positively

to peers (particularly for younger children)

2. Communication and interaction skills — such as being able to express an interest in joining a group and being able to invite others to do so and knowing how to communicate one's feelings;
3. Emotional understanding and self - regulation skills — such as understanding one's own feelings and the feelings of others (empathy); being able to manage strong emotions; and being attuned to social cues
4. Social problem - solving skills—such as knowing how to identify problems with peers and being able to generated different solutions for addressing those problems ; and Conflict resolution skills-combining a variety of social skills, such as communication, problem solving, self regulation, and negotiation, in order to

manage one's own conflicts or to mediate the conflicts of others.

Learners benefit in many ways from these positive peer interactions. They support learner's emotional development. Researches show that learners involved in this positive situation can easily make friendship, are popular among the peers, and easily engaged in classroom activities. This means that creating positive peer interactions can help teachers develop learners' social and academic aspects. The less positive social interactions in learners often results in negative consequences later in life, such as withdrawal, loneliness, depression, and feelings of anxiety (Ladd, 1999).

Some learners find it easy to have the interactions with their peers. But, some do not. In this case, a school, especially the teachers should be responsible to help learners how to interact positively with their peers. Out of three points in child rights, namely provision, protection, and participation, positive peer interaction is the can be adopted as an effort to protect learners from bullying and harassment. In the context of teaching and learning in Muhammadiyah Program Khusus Elementary School Surakarta, teachers are the main persons who are responsible to teach the learners not only to develop both learners' cognitive and social aspects. In the process of teaching and learning, the teachers should not only deliver the materials but also observe the interaction among the peers. This is not an easy task to do of course. To facilitate the teachers observe the classroom, the teachers make use of diary.

Each grade in Muhammadiyah Program Khusus Elementary School Surakarta have two parallel classes consisting of 30 learners each. Each class has a class council. The council is lead by a captain. One of the tasks of the class captain is writing everything happens in the class, especially the class situation in *Buku Kejadian* (translated into *Captain's Diary*). Through this diary, the teacher can reflect himself of the class situation when he is busy teaching and find the information if bullying happens. Based on the information he takes

from reading the diary, he can find the better way to teach and find the solution of the problems happen in the classroom.

The class council is chosen each month and everybody has a right to be chosen as the class council. One of the tasks to do is writing everything happens in the classroom in *Captain's Diary*. The diary gives some benefits, namely providing information of what happen in the classroom, becoming input for the teachers to make reflection, and helping teachers to overcome the problems faced by the learners. The awareness of the teachers about the importance of *Captain's Diary* automatically change the school rules in which there is an agreement to involve the learners in making decision. Even though is has not written formally, but the teachers agree to add the rule that they involve the learners in making decision.

An exploratory research was conducted as an initial research to design a model of increasing positive peer interactions through *Captain's Diary*. In this case, the team revitalized the use of *Captain's Diary* previously known as *Buku Kejadian*. On the basis of the explanation above, the study was conducted to describe the implementation of *Captain's Diary*, focusing on:

1. the procedure of using Captain's Diary to increase the learners' positive peer interaction,
2. the positive interaction occurred among the peers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This is an exploratory research which is conducted to understand an issue in a research thoroughly in a particular social setting. This type of research is conducted not to provide the final answer of a research questions. Singh (2007: p.64) stated that exploratory research is "the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research. It can even help in determining the research design, sampling methodology and data collection method" To implement this type of research, many proponents suggested four techniques, namely focus group discussion, secondary research, expert

survey, and open-ended questions. In this research, the team used open-ended questions in which the team interviewed the respondents about the use of *Captain's Diary*.

The respondents of the study were 30 fourth grade learners and the classroom teachers. To collect the data, the team used interview documentation. While the technique for analyzing the data used was Mile and Huberman's Model of Descriptive Interactive comprising three steps, namely data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion/verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

On the basis of the interview with the students and the classroom teachers, the team discusses the findings based on the objectives of the study.

1. The procedure of using *Captain's Diary* to increase the learners' positive peer interaction

Captain's Diary was revitalized as the solution of the problems in eliciting peer interaction. The procedure is discussed as follows.

- a. Voting for a Captain

Captain's Diary is a special book in Muhammadiyah Program Khusus Elementary School used to use it to help them observe the classroom. It was the Captain of each class who was responsible to write everything happened in the classroom. The captain was voted by the learners. The voting was conducted once a month. The captain was not chosen twice, which means that a learner had only one chance to be a leader in two semesters. This was done to give chances to all learners in the classroom to have an experience to be a captain.

- b. Writing the Diary

As the captain at the fourth grade was chosen, the captain was responsible to write what happened in the classroom. For several years, the captain wrote negative things

happened in the classroom. For example is as follows.

- (1) Rahma pinched Zahra's ears.
- (2) Haidar said 'stupid' to Imam
- (3) Sekar hit Rara.

The indicators of positive peer interaction used here are caring, kindness, respect, and trust. Based on the sentences written by the captain, it can be seen that some learners failed to interact positively with their peers.

In sentence (1), a learner named Rahma bullied Zahra by pinching her ears. Based on the result of the interview with the teachers, Rahma did it because she was annoyed as Zahra was indifferent when she was talking to her. Such attitude showed that Rahma was not kind to Zahra. While in sentence (2), Haidar gave his peer a bad name 'stupid'. From the result of the interview, it was found that Haidar did it because Imam could not answer a question asked by the teacher. The word uttered by Haidar irritated Imam. Haidar should help him do the work instead of calling his peer 'stupid'. This showed that Haidar did not care to his peer. In sentence (3) Sekar hit her peer to solve a problem. Hitting was a type of bullying in which a peer hurt others. This bad attitude inflicted more serious problem.

- c. Discussing a Problem Found

When there was a report about a 'special case' happened in the classroom, the teachers directly talked about the problems with the learners involved in the problem. The main purposes were to solve the problem and teach them how they should behave. The teachers explained that they suggested the three learners to apologize to their peers and told them how they should behave.

Telling what learners should do is not a solution to such problem. This technique cannot develop critical thinking, and learners tend to do the

same thing because they do not understand why and how problem occur. One of the solutions is through reflective thinking. As Bulpitt and Martin (2005) stated, critical thinking refers to building the critical evaluation of their previous learning experiences. Using reflective thinking, the learners can criticize the problem, trying to understand why the problem occurs, what consequences they have, and determine what they should do.

d. Sharing the Results of the Discussion with the Rest of the Class

After discussing with the learners who experienced a particular problem, the teachers taught all learners how they should interact with their peers. Based on the interview, the teachers take the following procedures.

- (1) Telling the learners an example of a negative interaction, like hitting or shouting others
- (2) Inviting the learners to comment on such negative interactions
- (3) The teachers discussed how they should interact.

Using classroom discussion is a good beginning to teach the learners how they should treat their peers. However, if this same technique is done all the time, boredom results. There are many interactive teaching techniques which can be implemented by the teachers to tell the learners how they should interact, such as drama, quiz, and role play.

2. The positive interactions occurred among the peers

To describe the result of the use of *Captain's Diary*, the team used open-ended questions to both the learners and the teachers. The questions given to the teachers are as follows.

- (1) Do you agree if *Captain's Diary* is used to create learners positive interaction?

It can be found in the result of the questions that the teachers agreed on using *Captain's Diary*. The use of the diary can improve the quality of learners' interactions. Qualified interactions refer to positive interaction like caring and collaborating.

(2) What are the benefits of using *Captain's Diary* in the classroom?

The benefits that the teachers have are as follows.

- Helping the teachers observe the class
- Facilitating them in building learners' characters.
- Giving chances for the learners to share their feeling and emotion
- Reducing problems found in the classroom

(3) Could you explain the changes in learners' interaction after using *Captain's Diary*?

- The learners care the others more
- They respect others, which can be seen from the way how they talk to their friends. It is not found a learner who calls his/her peer with a bad name.
- Learners can work with others more easily. They do not choose peers to work with in a group as they did before.

While for the learners, following are the questions.

(1) Who is writing the *Captain's Diary*?

- The captain of the class.
- Learners who was found bullying others or breaking the class rules

(2) Do you agree if the captain of the class use *Captain's Diary*? Why?

- Yes, because it is one of the learning contracts
- Yes, because their naughty friends cannot behave negatively again
- Agree
- Yes, because the victims of bullying can tell the teachers

- No, because my teachers often tell the problems to my parents and they are angry to me.
- (3) After your teachers discussed a 'special case' with the class, what are the things that you can learn?
- I have to respect my friends
 - I am not allowed to hurt my friends
 - I have to help my friends when needed.
- d. Engaging the learners' parents would be more fruitful.
 - e. This effort can be adopted as an alternative way to provide safe school.
2. *Captain's Diary* can be implemented to increase positive peer interactions. It can be seen from the results of the interview that the learners respect their peers, do not hurt, and help their peers. A similar study should be conducted by:

From the result of the answers above, it can be seen that *Captain's Diary* can be implemented to increase positive peer interaction. However, there are some things that deserve attention in using *Captain's Diary*. The first, it is important for the teachers to explain the learners about the reasons why they use *Captain's Diary*. It is based on the fact that not all learners agree with using the diary. The second, related to the fist

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The conclusion of the exploratory study is as follows

1. The teachers take the following procedures in using *Captain's Diary*; a) Voting for a Captain, b) Writing the Diary, c) Discussing a Problem Found, d) Sharing the Results of the Discussion with the Rest of the Class.

There are some important points which should be highlighted here:

- a. The school gives chance to the learners to participate, which can be seen from the captain who is chosen by the learners. Besides, all learners have chance to be chosen as the captain.
- b. In discussing the problem, it is better for the teachers to apply reflective thinking rather than lecturing.
- c. It is suggested that the captain does not only write bad things happen in the classroom but also write good things. It can be done to appraise those who can interact positively with their peers.

- a. getting the data from some sources, such as involving more informants (school committee and the head master), and event (through observation),
- b. formulating indicators to measure positive peer interactions.

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