

Understanding Teacher's Decision about Teaching and Learning Approaches for an Economics Classroom

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Keywords: Teaching and learning approaches, Lesson plans, Economic subjects.

Abstract: Teachers have an important role in the classroom, which will affect student learning outcomes. Teachers should be able to choose the appropriate teaching and learning approach in accordance with the characteristics of subjects, characteristics of students, and the attainment of competence. Arends (2007) instructional approaches consist of traditional/teacher-centered (lecture/presentation, direct instruction, concept teaching) and constructivist/learner-centered (cooperative learning, problem based learning, and classroom discussion). Unfortunately, teachers often have difficulty in determining the right approach to teaching and learning, thus using the same teaching and learning approaches for different subject matter, and teachers who are more active in learning. This preliminary study aims to understand the economics teacher's decision about teaching and learning approaches for effective instruction. This study employed qualitative approach utilizing focus group discussion and analyzing lesson plans made by economics' teachers. With a right decision about teaching and learning approaches, learning process can be more effectively and improved the student learning outcomes.

1 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge has increased rapidly. Increasing knowledge creates new problems for all countries. Because of this, many countries have changed their curricula. The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture declared the curriculum to develop students have 21st century competence that is critical thinking and problem solving, creative thinking and innovative, a communication skill, and collaboration. Four central 21st Century Skills, which are critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration, creativity, and the use of information technology (Valli et al 2014). Thinking skills have four components: creative thinking, decision making, critical thinking, and problem solving (Costa 2001, Hashim 2004).

A teacher is a person who plays the crucial role in developing a student in all aspects (Gage 2009, Arends 2007, Cruickshank et al 2006, Lang & Evans 2006). Teachers plays role as planner, organizer, and evaluator. The success of teachers in carrying out its role can be seen from the effectiveness of learning

that can affect the attainment of competence by students.

In teaching 21st century competence, how you teach is more important than what you teach (Hashim 2004, McGregor 2007). Therefore, teachers today should be able to choose the appropriate teaching and learning approach in accordance with the characteristics of subjects, characteristics of students, and the competence to be achieved. Unfortunately, still many teaching in Indonesian classrooms is strongly teacher-guided, text-oriented, and exercise-based. Teachers often have difficulty in determining the right approach to teaching and learning, thus using the same teaching and learning approaches for different subject matter, and teachers who are more active in learning.

This preliminary study aims to understand the economics teacher's decision about teaching and learning approaches for effective instruction. Understanding their experiences and listening to their opinions and suggestions will be able to reveal appropriate teaching and learning approaches. With a right decision about teaching and learning approaches, learning process can be more effectively and improved the student learning outcomes.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Lee Shulman (Arends 2007) organized the important domains of knowledge for teachers into seven categories: 1) *Content knowledge*, or knowledge of the particular subjects to be taught such as Mathematics, English, History; 2) *Pedagogical content knowledge*, that is the special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers; their own special form of professional understanding; 3) *Knowledge of learners*, and their characteristics; 4) *General pedagogical knowledge*, with special reference to those broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter; 5) *Knowledge of educational contexts*, ranging from the working of the group or classroom, to the governance and financing of school districts, to the character of communities and cultures; 6) *Curriculum knowledge*, with particular grasp of the materials and programs that serve as “tools of the trade” for teachers; and 7) *Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values* and their philosophical and historical grounds.

Lang & Evans (2006) needs to be concerned with five growth areas: 1) *Content knowledge*, knowledge of instructional and curriculum content, going beyond the text, extending student knowledge of subject matter, and restructuring knowledge; 2) *Level of conceptualization*, ability to identify problem areas or areas of improvement of one’s own teaching ability, identifying alternate behaviors, applying theories and ideas, and designing professional development plans; 3) *Teaching process*, capability in and appropriate use of a variety of instructional and classroom management skills, methods, and strategies; 4) *Interpersonal communication*, ability to communicate with students, school staff and parents; and 5) *Ego*, knowledge of oneself and willingness to take responsibility for one’s own behavior, being concerned for others, responding positively to feedback, being objective and honest, facilitating growth in others, developing a positive self-concept, and increasing self-esteem.

The most important aspect of teachers’ work is providing face-to-face instruction to students in classrooms (Arends 2007). How teaching is conducted has a large impact on students’ abilities to educate themselves (Joyce et al 2003). Teacher needs many approaches to meet their goals with a diverse population of students. A single approach or method is no longer adequate. With sufficient choices, teachers can select the approach that best achieves a particular objective and the approach that best suits a particular class of students. Over the years, many

different teaching and learning approaches have been created, developed, modified, and even combined. Joyce et al (2003) identifies over twenty major approaches to teaching such as structured inquiry, positive interdependence, group investigation, role playing, jurisprudential inquiry (social models); inductive thinking, concept attainment, scientific inquiry, inquiry training, mnemonics, synectics, advance organizers (information-processing models); nondirective teaching, enhancing self-esteem (personal models); mastery learning and programmed instruction, direct instruction, simulation (behavioral models). Arends (2007) classify six of models of teaching such as Lecture/presentation, direct instruction, and concept teaching (Traditional/Teacher-Centered); cooperative learning, problem based learning, classroom discussion (Constructivist/Learner-Centered). Lang & Evans (2006) instructional approaches consist of the direct instruction (lecture, tutorials, practice and drill); individual study (brainstorming, activity centers, CAI, journals); indirect instruction (discovery, guided inquiry, unguided inquiry, problem solving, decision making, concept mapping, case studies); experimental (field trip, field survey, field observation, model building, games, conducting experiments, simulations) and interactive (cooperative learning, buzz group, debates, panels). Cruickshank et al (2006) identifies thirty-one instructional alternatives for teaching such as academic games or competitions, brainstorming, cases, centers of interest and displays, colloquia, constructivism, contracts, debates, demonstration, direct instruction, discovery, discussion, drill and practice, field observation, fieldwork, field trip, independent study or supervised study, individualized instruction, learning modules, mastery learning, oral reports, presentation, problem solving, programmed and CAI, project or activity method, protocols, reciprocal teaching, recitation, role playing, simulation games, simulations, student-team, pupil-team, cooperative learning. There are some variations on the theme of cooperative learning such as Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD), Teams Games Tournaments (TGT), Team-Assisted Individualization and Team-Accelerated Instruction (TAI), jigsaw, and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC). The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture suggested science-based and activity-based learning with instructional approaches such as discovery, inquiry, problem based learning, and project based learning. Baeten et al. (2016) most students preferred teacher direction, cooperative learning and knowledge construction and student-

centre-learning is identified to enable deep understanding within students.

Teacher planning is a complex process. Planning interacts with all other aspects of teaching and is influenced by many factors. Arends (2007) There are three phases of teacher planning and decision making: 1)Before instruction: choosing content, choosing approach, allocating time and space, determining structures, and determining motivation; 2)During instruction: presenting, questioning, assisting, providing for practice, making transitions, managing and disciplining ; and 3) After instruction: checking for understanding, providing feedback, praising and criticizing, testing, grading, and reporting. Cruickshank et al (2006) when planning instruction, important decisions must be made regarding what to teach, how to teach it, and how learning will be assessed. Teachers needs to take decisions about how to teach it (instructional approaches). Wasley and her colleagues (Cruickshank et al 2006) Students seems to benefit when teachers use a variety of instructional strategies. They reached this conclusion after following high school students for three years and finding that students whose teachers' use instructional variety are more interested in school and more likely to invest their time in academics. Lang & Evans (2006) consistently uses a variety of teaching strategies and methods appropriate for the content and students; experiments with a variety of ways of teaching. The Indonesian government stated to choose the appropriate teaching and learning approach in accordance with the characteristics of subjects and learners, also the attainment of competence.

3 METHODS

This preliminary study employed qualitative approach utilizing focus group discussion. The method is used to understand teachers' decision about teaching and learning approaches, so that can be identified approaches to teaching and learning appropriate to each subject matter by taking into account the characteristics of students and competencies to be achieved. The focus group comprised of twenty-four (24) economic teachers in public and private senior high school in Bandung, Indonesia. The focus group was formed based on their tenure as economic teachers, as they represent their experiences in making lesson plans, which include choosing a teaching and learning approach. Teachers were asked to notify the problems that they faced during choosing a teaching and learning approach. Researcher was analyzing lesson plans in XI grade made by economic teachers. Qualitative information collected during this study was coded and analysed using Microsoft Excel because it enable the researcher to analyse the data in the original language.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of teachers whose participated in this preliminary study can seen at Table 1. Economic teachers in Bandung, Indonesia dominated by female teachers. In general, female who more professions as a teacher in Indonesia. Most of them have been teachers for more than 20 years, so they have experience in making lesson plans, although there have been several changes in the curriculum. The lesson plan in it requires the teacher to make decisions about the teaching and learning approach that will be used on each subject matter.

Table 1: Profile of teachers participated in the study.

Gender	School Status		Experience (years)				
	Public	Private	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	>20
Male	3	2	-	1	-	1	3
Female	14	5	5	2	3	3	6
	17	7	5	3	3	4	9

4.1 Characteristics of Economic Subjects

Economics is very broad, there is the study of micro economy and macro economy. Economic subjects are given to senior high-school students. Economic subjects focus on economic empirical phenomena that exist around among the students, so that learners

can understand the economic activity, cultivate, analyze, apply, and presenting observation results.

In curricula for XI grade, students learning about national income, economic growth and economic development, labor and unemployment, price index and inflation, money, monetary policy and fiscal

policy, state budget, taxation, international trade, and international economic cooperation.

The types of subject matter are facts, concepts, principles, and procedures. In determining the approach to teaching and learning, teachers are still less attention to the type of subject matter. This is due to the limited knowledge of teachers about the types of subject matter, even though teachers understand the subject matter very well. 11 teachers expressed difficulty in choosing an approach appropriate to the characteristics of economic subjects.

“I faced difficulties in determine the approach of teaching learning is in line with the characteristics of economic subjects”.

[Translated Transcript: Participant: XXX- 554]

Summarized from the teacher-made lesson plan to understand teachers' decision about teaching and learning approaches, on the same subject matter, between teachers apply different teaching and learning approaches.

Table 2: Teaching and learning approaches.
Subject Matter: National Income

Participant	Discovery	Inquiry	PBL	Project	Cooperative Learning
1	√		√		√
2	√	√			
3			√		√
4	√	√	√		
5	√		√		
6	√	√	√	√	√
7	√				√
8	√		√		√
9			√		
10			√		√
11	√				
12		√			√
13			√		
14	√				
15	√	√			
16	√	√	√	√	√
17	√				√
18	√	√	√		
19		√	√	√	√
20					√
21					
22	√		√		
23					√
24		√	√	√	

“To teach about national income, i only used problem-based learning”.

[Translated Transcript: Participant: XXX- 1452]

“I used inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning and project-based learning to teach about national income. Inquiry-based learning I use to teach the definition, benefits, and components of national income. Problem-based learning to teach per capita income and national income distribution, and project-based learning to learn about the method of national income”.

[Translated Transcript: Participant: XXX- 1461]

4.2 Characteristics of Students

Every human individual is unique. In support of previous literatures (Arends 2007, Cruickshank et al 2006, Lang & Evans 2006) every teacher should be able to accommodate different characteristics of student, in order to create effective teaching. Undeniable, students play important roles in learning process. As good as any teaching and learning approach planned by the teacher, if the students are passive in the learning process, then the desired goal will be difficult to achieve.

Participants have tried to consider the characteristics of students in determining teaching-learning approaches. However, as it is known, in

Indonesia's students study in large classes with more than 30 students per class. One participant mentioned that with large class, she had difficulties in applying the teaching-learning approach that has been planned, so the process is not maximal, such as not all students play an active role in the learning process, which impact on student learning outcomes.

"I have difficulties in choosing the approach which are appropriate to the characteristics of learners, which gives students the opportunity to experience themselves".

[Translated Transcript: Participant: XXX- 549]

4.3 Competency on Economic Subject

Economic subjects' competency as well as characteristics of subject and characteristic of students have to consider for choosing teaching-learning approaches. On the economic subjects of XI grade, The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture have determined nine basic competencies to be achieved. In the cognitive, includes students able to describe the concepts and methods of national income, describe the concept of economic growth and economic development as well as problems and how to overcome them, analyze employment problems in economic development, analyze price indexes and inflation, analyze monetary policy and fiscal policy, analyze state budget in economic development, analyze taxation in development, analyze trade concepts and policies, and describe international economic cooperation.

These competencies show that students are required to have higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Thus the learning presented should be able to motivate learners to think critically, logically, and systematically in accordance with the characteristics of Economics, and have higher-order thinking skills. Anderson categorizes the level of thinking into remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create.

During this learning process requires only low-level thinking skills, so that teachers have not been trained to apply higher-order thinking skills both in the learning process and assessment. As well as students faced problems to using high-order thinking skills.

"I have difficulties in choosing the approach which are in accordance with competence demands, which can motivate learners to think critically, and can

encourage learners to have higher-order thinking skills".

[Translated Transcript: Participant: XXX- 517]

5 CONCLUSIONS

Both of teachers and students plays an important role in learning process. Teachers who use the right approach to teaching and learning, if not supported by the characteristics of students it will be difficult to achieve goals. Students who are qualified, but do not get a good learning process with appropriate teaching and learning approach, then the expected competencies are difficult to achieve.

Most of the teachers do not demonstrate instructional variation because they have limited images of good teaching and have not learned a variety of instructional strategies or had the opportunity to practice them.

Teachers should be able to choose the appropriate teaching and learning approach in accordance with the characteristics of subjects, characteristics of students, and the attainment of competence could influence students learning process positively or even negatively. Becoming a truly accomplished teacher takes a long time, fueled by an attitude that learning to teach is a lifelong process.

However, since this study is at its preliminary stage and limited to a specific time scope more participants are considered to be necessary for future research.

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