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The Role of Teachers in Optimising the Talents and Interests of Students in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstrak

This study aims to describe the role of classroom teachers in optimising students' talents and interests at MIN 2 Sidoarjo. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach using field research methods, including observation, interviews, and documentation involving Grade V classroom teachers (VA, VB, and VC). The findings reveal that classroom teachers perform four key roles: facilitators, innovators, motivators, and communicators in supporting students' potential development. These roles are implemented through differentiated learning practices, emotional support, and effective communication with students and parents. The study highlights the strategic contribution of classroom teachers as the main agents of talent and interest development in madrasah ibtidaiyah that lack guidance counsellors. The findings imply that strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence in differentiated and student-centred learning is essential to support holistic student development in Islamic elementary education.

Keywords: *Differentiated Learning, Talent and Interest, and Teacher's Role*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran guru kelas dalam mengoptimalkan bakat dan minat peserta didik di MIN 2 Sidoarjo. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode penelitian lapangan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi terhadap guru kelas V (VA, VB, dan VC). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru kelas menjalankan empat peran utama, yaitu sebagai fasilitator, inovator, motivator, dan komunikator dalam mendukung pengembangan potensi peserta didik. Peran tersebut diwujudkan melalui penerapan pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, pemberian dukungan emosional, serta komunikasi efektif dengan peserta didik dan orang tua. Temuan penelitian ini menegaskan peran strategis guru kelas sebagai agen utama pengembangan bakat dan minat peserta didik di madrasah ibtidaiyah yang belum memiliki guru Bimbingan Konseling. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya penguatan kompetensi pedagogik guru kelas dalam mengelola pembelajaran yang berorientasi pada pengembangan potensi peserta didik secara holistik.

Kata Kunci: Bakat, Guru, Minat, Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi

Introduction

The development of students' talents and interests is one of the important issues in basic education, in line with the demands of 21st-century education, which emphasises the holistic development of students' individual potential. Nationally, the Indonesian education system is no longer solely focused on academic achievement, but also on strengthening character, creativity, and the unique potential of each student. However, in practice, the development of talents and interests in elementary schools is still often centred on extracurricular activities, so it is not yet fully integrated into the learning process in the classroom.

In the context of madrasah ibtidaiyah, talent and interest development have their own characteristics because madrasahs not only function as general educational institutions, but also as Islamic educational institutions that instil Islamic values in the entire learning process. Madrasahs face the challenge of limited resources, including the unavailability of guidance counsellors in most madrasah ibtidaiyah. This condition places classroom teachers as the main actors responsible not only for the academic achievement of students, but also for the comprehensive development of the talents and interests of students. Teachers, as educators at the forefront, have a great responsibility in recognising and optimising the talents and interests of their students. Not only as conveyors of material, but teachers also become facilitators, motivators, and mentors in the process of student growth and development, including in non-academic aspects. With the right approach, teachers are able to create a learning environment that encourages the emergence of students' talents and interests.

Theoretically, based on humanistic education theory, teachers are not only tasked with transferring knowledge but also with nurturing students' potential and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1954). Teachers play a role in creating a learning environment that supports the exploration of abilities, provides opportunities for students to express themselves, and helps them

find fields that suit their inclinations and strengths. Therefore, teachers are key to creating a balance between academic and non-academic aspects in the educational process. According to Apiyani et al. (2022), the roles of teachers in schools are as educators, instructors, mentors, leaders, learning facilitators, role models, community members, and administrators.

Previous studies that have discussed students' talents and interests have mostly only discussed activities that can develop students' talents and interests. For example, research conducted by Muhammad Tholhah (2024) discussed "The Implementation of Religious Extracurricular Activities in Developing Students' Interests and Talents" (Tholhah ,2024). In addition, research conducted by Putri Hana Salsabila, Dina Syaflita, and Novi Indriani (2023) also discussed "Extracurricular Activities as a Forum for Developing Student Talents and Interests" (Salsabila, Syaflita, & Indriani, 2023). The research conducted by Reza Hawari, M. Fauzi Hasibun, et al. (2023) differs from the research of the two researchers who discussed extracurricular activities. Reza Hawari et al. discussed "The Role of Guidance Counselling in Developing Student Talents" (Hawari et al., 2023).

The difference between the three previous studies and this study lies in their focus, which emphasizes the role of teachers in optimising students' talents and interests. Previous studies mostly discussed activities that can develop talents and interests, and the role of guidance counsellors in developing talents and interests. The weakness of previous studies lies in the lack of in-depth exploration of the role of classroom teachers in developing students' talents and interests through the daily learning process. In fact, classroom teachers have a high intensity of interaction with students and great opportunities to integrate potential development into learning activities.

The gap in this research is that researchers are interested in the context of the roles that teachers play in developing talents and interests, because teachers are not only conveyors of material but also must guide the growth and development process of students. Based on this gap, this study

focuses on the context of MIN 2 Sidoarjo, an elementary madrasah that does not yet have a guidance counsellor, so the responsibility for developing students' potential lies with the classroom teachers. This study aims to describe the role of classroom teachers in optimising students' talents and interests, as well as to identify the forms of roles carried out by teachers in the learning process in grade V at MIN 2 Sidoarjo. The conditions at MIN 2 Sidoarjo show that this school does not yet have a dedicated guidance counsellor. Thus, the responsibility for developing the potential of students lies entirely with the classroom teachers. In addition to facing resource constraints, teachers also need to understand the various characteristics and individual differences of students. Therefore, this study is important to explore how teachers carry out their roles in optimising the talents and interests of students in grade V at MIN 2 Sidoarjo. Grade V, as an educational level that is entering a more complex phase of development, is an important moment to provide more focus and attention to improving the talents and interests of students. Based on this background, this study seeks to describe the role of teachers in optimising the talents and interests of students at MIN 2 Sidoarjo, as well as to illustrate the various strategies used by teachers in recognising, facilitating, and developing the potential of each student so that they can develop optimally according to their abilities and interests.

Methods

This study uses field research with a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research allows researchers to understand the meaning behind teachers' actions and experiences in context through the collection of natural and in-depth data (Setiawan, 2018). This research was conducted at MIN 2 Sidoarjo, considering the school's good quality and its students' achievements in both academic and non-academic fields. The participants in this study were all fifth-grade homeroom teachers, from VA to VC. The criteria for selecting subjects were based on how much knowledge the

teachers had about the characteristics of each student, which is why the researcher used homeroom teachers.

Data analysis was conducted interactively using the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing on relevant data in accordance with the research focus, which was then presented in the form of a descriptive account. After that, conclusions were drawn and verified repeatedly to ensure that the analysis results truly reflected the conditions in the field.

Data collection techniques used (1) observation, in the form of direct observation of the habits frequently performed by students at the madrasah, (2) interviews, by interviewing homeroom teachers who participated to obtain more in-depth information, (3) documentation, in the form of photographs that can be used as documentation. Data validity is maintained through triangulation techniques, which include source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing information from teachers of classes VA, VB, and VC; technique triangulation is carried out by combining the results of observation, interviews, and documentation; while time triangulation is carried out by collecting data at different times to ensure consistency of information.

Result

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation of teachers of classes VA, VB, and VC at MIN 2 Sidoarjo, it was found that the role of teachers in optimising students' talents and interests covers four main themes, namely:

1. Facilitator

As facilitators, teachers need to act as mentors who are able to help students when they encounter difficulties in developing their talents and creativity, to support and facilitate their learning process (Magdalena et al.,

2020). In practice, teachers become facilitators who provide space for students to express themselves. In class VA, teachers often give extra time to students who are interested in the arts, such as drawing or reading poetry. The homeroom teacher of class VA said, "Every child has different strengths, so I allow them to choose activities that they like as long as they are still in line with their learning". While teachers in class VB use thematic learning methods that allow students to express themselves through simple project activities. Meanwhile, teachers in class VC often involve students in small group activities so that they can demonstrate their ability to speak and work together.

2. Innovator

The role of teachers as innovators can be seen in their efforts to create learning variations and media that are relevant to students' interests. Grade VA teachers developed image-based learning media for visual learners, while grade VB teachers implemented a project-based learning model to accommodate children with practical talents. The homeroom teacher of class VB revealed that "If the learning model used is interesting, children are more enthusiastic and dare to show their abilities." While grade VC teachers innovated by using educational games that stimulate students' creativity and cooperation.

3. Motivator

Motivation is an important element in developing students' talents and interests. Students' motivation to learn can encourage them to be more diligent in their studies and foster enthusiasm in the learning process (Amelia, Hilyana, & Santoso, 2022). The VA class teacher conveyed motivation by providing direct support to students participating in the competition. The VB class teacher uses a verbal approach by providing positive reinforcement at the beginning of the lesson. The VC class teacher emphasizes personal closeness, such as greeting and chatting with students outside of class hours to understand their emotional state. The homeroom

teacher said, "Children need to be approached and convinced that they are capable, so that they dare to try without fear of failure".

4. Communicator

Effective teachers must be able to convey messages clearly, empathetically, and inspiringly. Communication is key to a teacher's success in building relationships that support student development. The VA class teacher communicates intensively with parents through the class WhatsApp group to discuss their children's progress. The homeroom teacher of class VA said, "If communication with parents is smooth, it is easier for us to guide children according to their potential." The VB class teacher emphasizes the importance of two-way communication in the classroom so that students are more confident in expressing their opinions. Meanwhile, the VC class teacher uses an interpersonal communication approach to build trust and emotional closeness with students.

Discussion

The results of this study show that classroom teachers at MIN 2 Sidoarjo perform four main roles that complement each other in the process of optimising students' talents and interests. These roles are in line with Suharto & Hartono's (2002) view that teachers are figures who not only teach but also monitor, guide, and develop students' individual abilities.

1. Facilitator

As facilitators, teachers apply the principle of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2014), which involves tailoring learning content, processes, and products to students' interests and abilities. Project activities, small groups, and interest-based assignments demonstrate that teachers have adapted the learning process to suit the individual needs of students. The role of teachers as facilitators found in this study shows that classroom teachers strive to adapt the learning process to the interests and characteristics of their students. In line with the research conducted by Siwi Utaminingsi and Ahmad Shadad Kholim, differentiated learning involves a

dynamic view of students, where teachers observe the learning process from various perspectives (Utaminingsyas & Kholim, 2024). In practical terms, these findings imply that madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers need to design flexible learning activities and provide learning options so that students' talents and interests can develop optimally.

2. Innovator

The role of teachers as innovators supports (Guilford, 1967) view of the importance of divergent thinking in education. Innovation in learning strategies and media reflects teachers' ability to adapt to classroom dynamics and create engaging and meaningful learning experiences. Findings regarding the role of teachers as innovators show that classroom teachers strive to provide a variety of learning methods and media to stimulate students' interest in learning. This is reinforced by research conducted by Meylan Saleh et al., which shows that educational institutions, especially elementary schools, as the foundation of education in providing the best education for their students and a prerequisite for the advancement and development of educational institutions, must have innovative capabilities and be able to collaborate (Saleh et al., 2024). The practical implication for madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers is the importance of developing contextual and realistic learning innovations, such as the use of simple media, educational games, and small project-based learning.

3. Motivator

The role of motivators is consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (Maslow, 1954), especially at the level of esteem needs. When teachers provide support, praise, or rewards for students' efforts, this strengthens their self-confidence and intrinsic motivation to continue developing. The role of teachers as motivators is evident through the provision of positive reinforcement, emotional support, and encouragement to students to dare to show their potential. This is reinforced by research conducted by Amalia, which states that motivation can make us more focused and focused in carrying out learning activities and can also increase existing

efforts (Kusumawati, 2024). In practice, madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers need to build a supportive and appreciative classroom climate so that students feel psychologically safe to develop their potential.

4. Communicator

The role of the communicator is related to humanistic education theory (Rogers, 1969), which emphasises the importance of empathetic relationships and open communication between teachers and students. Teachers who are able to communicate in a warm and supportive manner will create a safe learning environment and encourage students to express themselves without fear. The role of teachers as communicators emphasises the importance of effective communication between teachers, students, and parents in developing talents and interests. Reinforced by research conducted by Rivana et al., it reveals that the role of teachers as communicators not only focuses on interactions with students but also includes harmonious relationships with various parties involved in education (Marizka et al., 2024). The practical implication for madrasah ibtidaiyah teachers is the need to establish open and ongoing communication with parents as partners in nurturing the potential of students.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the role of teachers in optimising the talents and interests of students at MIN 2 Sidoarjo is multidimensional, encompassing four main roles, namely as facilitators, innovators, motivators, and communicators. These four roles show that teachers do not only function as conveyors of subject matter, but also as agents of the holistic development of students' potential. This finding adds to the scientific knowledge in the field of Islamic basic education by highlighting the importance of the role of classroom teachers, not only guidance counsellors, as the spearhead in developing student potential in madrasas with limited resources.

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the role of classroom teachers has a significant contribution to the formation of a learning environment that supports the development of students' talents and interests. Teachers who are sensitive to the individual potential of students are able to create a learning process that is oriented towards strengthening the uniqueness of students, both through activities in and outside the classroom. The scientific contribution of this research lies in its conceptual approach, which positions classroom teachers as differentiated educators, namely teachers who adapt learning strategies to the needs, interests, and talents of students as part of the development of a humanistic and inclusive Islamic education.

In addition to providing an empirical description of the role of teachers at MIN 2 Sidoarjo, this study also provides a new direction for the development of learning management in madrasah ibtidaiyah. This approach emphasises that Islamic basic education does not only aim to produce academically excellent students, but also to help them discover and develop their best potential as a form of worship and self-actualisation.

Recommendation

As a recommendation, further research could develop a talent and interest development model based on curriculum differentiation that is tailored to the characteristics of madrasah students. This model could be developed through talent mentoring programs, interest portfolios, or digital-based learning profile systems that help teachers monitor students' potential development on an ongoing basis. In addition, further research is also recommended to explore the involvement of parents and the madrasah community in supporting the development of students' potential in order to create a collaborative and sustainable Islamic education ecosystem.

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