

The Importance of Understanding Student Character to Support Successful Learning in Junior High School

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Abstract

This research is a type of descriptive qualitative and quantitative research, raising the problem of teachers' understanding of student characteristics in supporting student learning success in learning. Therefore, this study was analyzed using qualitative techniques and processed by describing the data in the form of tabulation of the data from the percentage of the questionnaire to students and teachers as research samples or respondents. The population of this study was all students and teachers of SMPN 2 Bulukumba, Bulukumba Regency, so it was determined as a sample of 20 students and 12 class teachers. The results showed that at SMPN 2 Bulukumba, through the efforts or methods made by the teacher in understanding the characteristics of students, the average teacher used several methods such as the observation method by visiting the house and the method of using the test, and the positive effect felt by the teacher is that it increases student learning outcomes and makes it easier for teachers to carry out the learning process. Therefore, it is very important for all teachers, both as homeroom teachers and field teachers, to understand the characteristics of each student.

Keywords: *the importance of character, learning success, Junior high school*

Introduction

The world of education is a basis for a person to gain knowledge, experience, and skills that require much effort and process to be done and paid attention to. Something that is not easy to achieve because many things need to be understood in the process. Elementary school education that functions to provide basic provisions for the development of life, both personal and community life, and preparing students to attend education at a higher level, of course, requires a teacher who can truly understand each character (student).

As educators and lecturers, teachers hold key positions in achieving learning success. Meanwhile, teaching is an attempt to create conditions or environmental systems that support and allow for the learning process. Moreover, if learning belongs to students, then teaching is a teacher activity. If that is the case, in the teaching and learning process, to create successful learning for all students, both in the form of groups and individually, understanding the characteristics of students is a task that is the teacher's responsibility before the process. Therefore, teaching and learning take place in order to be able to understand it by observing and approaching each student directly.

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Essentially, providing conducive conditions so that each student can learn optimally, even though it is in a group form. In the teaching and learning process, the emphasis must be placed on understanding the quality of teaching in what influences students or students individually and not in groups. If that is the case in teaching and learning activities, each student requires different treatment so that the strategies and implementation efforts are different and varied.

Knowledge of student characteristics is very important for teachers because it is very useful in determining better teaching patterns for their students. With this understanding, the teacher can understand every action students take individually, for teachers. If they understand the characteristics of students, the treatment given by the teacher will be responded to in various ways by students is an absolute thing to happen, because each individual has different characteristics, and this is what makes the class atmosphere sometimes calm, sometimes noisy if students are given an assignment some of them do not want to do it, some are serious, and some annoy their friends. Therefore, each student should be given a different treatment.

A good understanding of the characteristics of students will certainly have a positive impact on students and direct teachers to understand the desired needs better individually. Thus the patterns imposed by the teacher in the learning process can be by what is expected by each individual, which consciously or not affect the success of individual student learning as well.

Method

The focus of this research is on the individual characteristics of students, which with a good understanding by the teacher, will impact better learning success. The population in this study were all 349 students and 19 teachers of SMPN 2 Bulukumba. The author determined that sampling was carried out in this study using a purposive sampling technique, namely sampling based on the objectives to be achieved. Based on these considerations, the number of samples taken was 20 students.

Data collection techniques, namely through library research and field research. Library research, which is to collect some literature related to the problems discussed, whether sourced from books, magazines, newspapers, or the internet, while field research is carried out through observation, interviews, objective tests, and documentation. Data management techniques through qualitative management, namely management based on data obtained through research, interviews, documentation, literature, direct observations related to the teaching and learning process of students with those related to the problems discussed, while quantitative management, namely data management in the form of numbers from the results of the questionnaire or questionnaire distributed to students as samples or research objects.

Results and Discussion

Teacher's Method in Understanding Student Characteristics

In using educational methods for students, including understanding their characteristics, it must be adjusted to the size of the age development of students (students), and several development measures such as cognitive, language, creativity, emotional and social. Therefore, the method used must consider the ability of students to understand a lesson, allowing children

to interact with each other so that they can meet the needs and interests of students in the learning process. In addition, through the close relationship between students and teachers will be able to develop the teacher's understanding of the characteristics of students.

Therefore, in the learning process in the classroom, the teacher always tries to approach each student psychologically so that the teacher can understand more deeply the characteristics of students. Regarding the discussion of student characteristics, based on the results of research obtained by the author, there are several kinds of methods that teachers use to understand student characteristics, including observing the state or ability of students' knowledge levels, student learning styles, family background, personal circumstances and so on.

1. Observing students' knowledge level

In this process, the teacher always observes every child's learning development. In this case, the value obtained in each semester is whether it is better, constant, or even more declining. In addition, in the learning process, when the teacher explains, it can be observed from students' attitude in responding to the lessons given. This is related to the ability to think intellectually and say things related to psychomotor.

2. Observing the educational background and social status of students

In this case, the teacher can ask for personal data from students, such as name, date, and place of birth, address, gender, name of parent/guardian, religion, and so on. In addition, the condition of the house, such as the work of the mother and father, the number of siblings, the last education of the parents (elementary, junior high, high school, bachelor), the atmosphere of the house, and the status of the house, meanwhile in terms of health, for example, disability or living habits.

In this activity, the teacher can get a definite picture, especially regarding the state of the house, social status, and student's circumstances, by conducting interviews with both parents and other families, and even neighbors. This is mainly done for students who experience certain difficulties or problems.

Based on the research results obtained from 20 students, their parents' last education was junior high school, and their occupation was a farmer. In detail, it can be described that 16 students whose parents graduated from junior high school and whose occupations are farmers, two parents whose last education is high school (1 civil servant and one entrepreneur), and two parents of undergraduate students with work as civil servants.

3. Observing student learning behavior

In this case, the teacher makes observations on students' behavior to obtain data about the behavior of students. In the process, the teacher pays attention to the results of the lesson and pays attention to the talents, interests, character, freedom, habits, openness, and how each child works. For this to work well, it is necessary to create a close and good relationship between the teacher and the student. In addition to observations carried out in the classroom, observations are also carried out outside the classroom because, in informal moments, the true nature of students can be more easily observed. The observations obtained illustrate that students generally prefer the characteristics of learning behavior that are formatted in the form of groups.

4. Using attitude test

In this activity, students can be given various tests according to the objectives or answers they need. For example, the achievement test, which is a test given to determine the mastery of students' subject matter, personality test, which determines the character of students, and so on.

5. Using a questionnaire

In this case, it is done to find out the personal data of the child or each student, also related to the interests or talents of students. So in the questionnaire, the teacher-designed several questions that could cover all the data needed. The benefits of distributing questionnaires are that the implementation process requires a shorter time and is more efficient because it can be carried out simultaneously for all students.

In terms of the objectives to be achieved, namely to determine the characteristics of students, the things above are some of the methods commonly used by teachers at SMPN 2 Bulukumba. In addition, however, the authors have distributed a questionnaire containing questions about methods for understanding student characteristics to strengthen the research data. This is done so that the data obtained is more valid and convincing. The data in question can be seen through the tables below:

Table 1. Several methods are needed in understanding student characteristics

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|---|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 01 | In understanding the characteristics of students, several methods are needed in addition to approaches in the | Agree | 12 | 100% |
| | | Disagree | - | 0% |
| | | Do not agree | - | 0% |
| | | Total | 12 | 100% |

Based on the table above, it can be stated that to understand the characteristics of students, many methods are needed, both during the learning process and outside the classroom; this is indicated by the answers of respondents who chose 100% to agree on answers. Moreover, those who answered disagreed 0%, and there were no teachers or 0% who answered disagreed.

Table 2. Teachers need to establish communication with parents in understanding student characteristics

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|---|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 02 | Communicating with parents makes it easier for teachers to read student characteristics | Agree | 10 | 83% |
| | | Disagree | 2 | 17% |
| | | Do not agree | - | 0% |
| | | Total | 12 | 100% |

Based on the table above, it can be stated that the role of collaboration between teachers and parents in observing student characteristics is very important because the source of information

from parents about children's habits is one of the factors informing student characteristics. Moreover, this is based on respondents who chose the answer to agree as much as 83%. Moreover, those who answered disagreed 17%, and there were no teachers or 0% who answered disagreed.

Table 3. Family background is a factor that supports the formation of the characteristics of children or students

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|---|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 03 | Family background is a factor that supports the formation of the character of a child or student. | Agree | 9 | 75% |
| | | Disagree | 2 | 18% |
| | | Do not agree | 1 | 7% |
| Total | | | 12 | 100% |

Based on the table above, it can be stated that character building is family background, for example, whether you come from a happy family, broken home, affluent family, deficiency, etc. Moreover, this is based on respondents who chose the answer to agree as much as 75%. Moreover, those who answered disagreed 18%, and there were no teachers or 7% who answered disagreed.

Each respondent's answer is based on direct observations to the parents' homes and the results of interviews with students when approaching them to understand their characteristics.

Table 4. The learning process takes place effectively and efficiently if the teacher understands the characteristics of students

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 04 | By understanding the characteristics of students, teachers can more easily carry out the learning process effectively and efficiently. | Agree | 10 | 83% |
| | | Disagree | 2 | 17% |
| | | Do not agree | - | 0% |
| Total | | | 12 | 100% |

Based on the table above, it can be stated that the teacher's understanding of student characteristics makes it easier for teachers to carry out the learning process; this can be because teachers can provide things that are by student needs and remain based on learning objectives. Moreover, this is based on respondents who chose the answer to agree as much as 83%. Moreover, those who answered disagreed 17%, and there were no teachers or 0% who answered disagreed.

Table 5. Questionnaire method as an effective method in understanding student characteristics

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|---|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 05 | The method of distributing questionnaires to parents of students can be the most effective, and the results are | Agree | 5 | 41% |
| | | Disagree | 2 | 18% |
| | | Do not agree | 5 | 41% |
| Total | | | 12 | 100% |

Based on the data above, it can be stated that in understanding the characteristics of students, the method of distributing questionnaires can be considered effective because the time required is relatively short and does not require much energy. However, with the reasons stated by the respondents in choosing the answers, the average teacher was worried about the objectivity of the parents' answers because it involved personal data. Moreover, this is based on respondents who chose the answer to agree as much as 41%. Moreover, those who answered disagreed 18%, and those who chose to disagree 41%.

From the descriptions of the tables above, it can be concluded that, in general, teachers use many methods in understanding student characteristics; apart from those directly sourced from students, parent-teacher communication is also important in understanding student characteristics. A factor in the formation of children's character.

The method of distributing questionnaires to parents of students is effective in terms of time and effort, but objectively it cannot be considered valid regarding questions about the personality of students' parents. Therefore, in the process of understanding the characteristics of students, teachers have to do many methods, and the most important thing in terms of the objectives of student characteristics is to make it easier.

The Effect of Understanding Student Characteristics in Improving Student Learning.

Teaching and learning is a process that is carried out with full awareness to make changes to students' mindsets, attitudes, and behavior patterns. However, to realize all of that cannot be separated from the teacher's ability to understand the characteristics of students.

In the process of this research, after the authors conducted observations and interviews with teachers and students, there were many things that the teacher could benefit from if the teacher was able to understand the characteristics of students.

Among the benefits perceived by teachers are:

1. Teachers can easily choose the right method to be applied in the learning process.
2. Teachers can better understand what can be done for each student who has different characteristics.
3. Individually, teachers can understand students' habits during the learning process.
4. Teachers can give different treatment to each student because the teacher understands that each learning style that students are interested in is different.
5. By understanding the characteristics of students, teachers can be wiser in making decisions and treating each student.

The above are the benefits felt by the teacher in understanding the characteristics of students. Meanwhile, from the treatment or attitude of the teacher in teaching, after the teacher understands each student's characteristics, the students also experience different things in the learning process. Moreover, based on the research results obtained based on students' answers regarding the learning development experienced after the teacher made an understanding of the characteristics of students, it can be seen in the table below:

Table 6. Through the learning process, there is a change in habits in a positive direction.

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 01 | There was a positive change after going through the learning process implemented by the teacher. | Agree | 18 | 90% |
| | | Disagree | 1 | 5% |
| | | Do not agree | 1 | 5% |
| Total | | | 20 | 100% |

Based on the table above, it can be stated that students experience changes in habits in a positive direction in the learning process. This is based on the answers of respondents or students who chose to agree as much as 98% and who chose less agree and disagree only 5%.

Table 7. Through attitudes in the application of learning in the classroom, students can acquire special skills

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 02 | Students obtain special skills after applying learning through attitudes by the teacher. | Agree | 19 | 95% |
| | | Disagree | 1 | 5% |
| | | Do not agree | 0 | 0% |
| Total | | | 20 | 100% |

Based on the table above, it can be stated that the positive impact felt by students after the teacher understands their characteristics is that students can acquire special skills, which are a learning process that teachers apply to students. This is based on the reasons put forward by students in the questionnaire distributed. Moreover, based on the respondent's answers, 95% of the respondents chose the answer to agree, and those who chose less agreed were 5%, and 0% disagreed.

Table 8. Student learning motivation is better

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 03 | Students are more motivated in learning after the teacher understands the characteristics of students. | Agree | 17 | 85 % |
| | | Disagree | 3 | 15% |
| | | Do not agree | 0 | 0% |
| Total | | | 20 | 100% |

Based on the table above, it can be stated that the motivation to learn is better and enthusiastic in the learning process after the teacher can understand the characteristics of students. This is indicated by the answers of respondents who chose to agree as much as 85%, and those who chose less to agree by 15%, and 0% disagree.

Table 9. Student learning outcomes increase

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 04 | With various learning approach methods in understanding student characteristics, student learning outcomes will be better. | Agree | 15 | 75% |
| | | Disagree | 3 | 15% |
| | | Do not agree | 2 | 10% |
| Total | | | 20 | 100% |

Based on the table above, it can be stated that with the teacher's understanding of student characteristics, the learning outcomes obtained by students are getting better in the learning process. This is supported by the increased motivation of students to participate in the learning process. This is indicated by respondents who chose to agree as much as 75%, who chose not to agree by 15%, and who disagreed 10%.

Table 10. Students become more active in learning and can make observations and understand existing conditions

| No | Description | Alternative Answer | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 05 | Students are more active in learning and can make observations and understand the existing conditions. | Agree | 16 | 80% |
| | | Disagree | 3 | 15% |
| | | Do not agree | 1 | 5% |
| Total | | | 20 | 100% |

Based on the table above, it can be stated that in the learning process, through the method applied by the teacher when teaching after understanding each student's characteristics, students become more active, and students can understand and make observations well. This is indicated by the answers of respondents who chose to agree as much as 80%, who chose not to agree by 15%, and only 5% disagreed.

From the descriptions of the tables above, it can be concluded that understanding the characteristics of students carried out by the teacher has a positive impact on improving student learning; as described above, on average, students state that they have experienced a change in habits in a positive direction, have special skills. And can make observations and be able to understand the existing conditions.

Such circumstances certainly have a positive effect on teachers; for example, it can be considered successful in educating children because learning objectives can be achieved. Moreover, the above suggests that each teacher is important to understand the characteristics of students in educating at school.

It is understood that every student has different characteristics and different backgrounds. So with these differences, the teacher must be able to observe each student's weaknesses and strengths as a teacher reference to take action on each student in a way that is, of course, based on the observations that have been made. This is very useful to support the success of learning for each student.

Because in principle sometimes teachers also make efforts for the success of student learning in the same way for all students, and in this way provide a comparison that each student has been given the same materials, methods, techniques and teaching methods but the results are not all students get the same results. Expected. This is natural because every student has differences in addition to character and background, including the level of the realm of education, namely in terms of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, so it is highly demanded that teachers always observe, control, and interview each student in order to understand their characteristics.

In achieving student learning success, this is very important because by understanding it, the teacher can take appropriate action, be wiser, and understand students' actions and their abilities and weaknesses.

Conclusion

Some of the teacher's methods to understand the characteristics of students namely observing the level of student knowledge, observing the background and social status of students, observing student learning behavior, using attitude tests and questionnaires. The teacher's understanding of student characteristics will benefit students, such as experiencing a change in habits in a positive direction, acquiring learning skills, observing and understanding them, feeling happy and diligent in learning.

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