

## PROMOTING COLLABORATIVE CONSULTATION TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

Indonesia's education sector has been experiencing development, but the inclusive segment needs more support since the number of disabled students are rising while the readiness of schools to nurture them seems under performed. The main problem is the discrepancy between school educators' competence and the special needs of students. In the west, it is common for school to have a collaborative consultation to overcome such problem. It interconnects collaborators in an equal position to reciprocally develop the best solution for existing problems. This paper aims to promote the term for education stakeholders in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *collaborative consultation, special needs, inclusive education*

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia education problem is the result of slow innovation in education, particularly, in inclusive education sector. It was in 2003, a legislation on behalf of inclusive school passed, but nowadays a substantial percentage of population of special children remain in special school. In contrast with most developed country, which let all students, no matter their difficulties—to study together in any public or private school (Dettmer et al., 2013). This problem appears as excluding students with special needs is a tradition and allowing them in schools means a lot of investment. It is difficult for educational institutions to do so, although

education is one of the departments with the largest portion of public spending.

Many scholars point out 'corruption' as one significant factor pulling the effort, as they made a few amounts of public fund reach the school (Suryadarma, 2012). With only a small number of resources left, educational institutions prioritize on administration costs and building new facilities rather than improving the quality of education. This causes gaps of educational technology or system such as educational consultation in schools.

As a collateral damage, the implementation of inclusive education is lack in many aspects since it only

receives what is left from the spending of education for the ‘normal students’. To illustrate, Poernomo (2016) assert the deficit of facilities in schools for physically disabled children, incompetence teachers in charge and other parent mistreating them are problems in inclusive school in Indonesia.

As we see from the previous paragraphs, there is a need to solve the existing problems using an intervention that is cost-efficient but result-effective. It signals an urgency to infuse an additional assistance for the teachers. This paper, then, is the effort to promoting the collaborative consultation as one of many viable solutions to raise the quality of education--in general and special education in particular--in Indonesia by integrating teachers, families and students.

### **Defining the Concept**

It was not until the 1970s the collaboration in schools introduced in works of literature and viewed by numerous western education professionals and scholars as most effective, partially for the student with disabilities care (Friend & Cook, 2010). From that year until recently, the term of both collaboration and consultation are still evolving; through critics, evaluation

and recommendation, therefore the collaborative consultation is unable to be interpreted in a static definition, but it has a recurring pattern that distinguish it from other process.

Idol and colleagues (1994) might have one general idea about this topic. They proposed collaborative consultation as a vigorous activity between a team of educators in multi background to share their resources with a goal. The definition was arisen, after a systematic distinction of the word collaboration as ‘to work together’ from the Latin ‘laborare’, and consultation as an activity to expose the problem to an expert for advancement purpose of the consultee (Idol, Nevin & Paolucci-whitcomb, 1994). Thus, the collaboration means an approach, which could apply to a consultation as a process (Friend & Cook, 2010). In conclusion, collaborative consultation is an event of people in many roles-related-problems to produce the most efficient strategy or solution of a problem faced (Cook & Friend, 2010).

Drawing from these definitions, inclusive education teachers may work together with many experts from relevant background, including the family of the students, or even the students themselves. Since every of them has an ‘expertise’ and has a direct and indirect influence

toward diminishing the learning hindrance. To conclude, this framework enables a better solution circulation and generation by involving those regarded irrelevant or inappropriate. The framework considers a student's coping process as an individual and a communal process as well. Hence, there is a need to allow the student itself and its environment to take part in the consultation process.

One should also consider the difference between consultation and counseling. The latter means a therapeutic process to solve personal problem of the consultee, some might relate to it mental health. While the former, the consultant, working as an 'agent of change' who willing to make an improvement in the system by developing educational technology (Dettmer, Knackendoffel, & Thurston, 2013; Conoley, 1981). Thus, they differ in both the goals pursued and the methods used.

### **Consultation Approach and Models**

There are two consultation approaches: behavioral and mental health. Both have their own concept regarding to the consultation process. The first one is derived from learning theory of Bandura and extended by Bergan (Kampwirth & Powers, 2012). Based on the approach,

the goal of consultation is to address and change a specific maladaptive behavior by intervention. The second approach is an extent of Freudian concept of human mind, which proposed by Gerald Kaplan (Kampwirth & Powers, 2012). On the contrary with the former approach, the mental health views human problem as a reciprocal relation between individual mind and its social environment. Thus, it includes emotion and feeling into practice.

Consultation models are unique in the emphasis rather than the overall concept. (1) Conjoint behavioral consultation is stressing the contribution of both teacher and the family to identify and resolve the problem in the client. While (2) instructional consultation is to equip the teacher with sufficient strategy of instruction according to the client weakness. Lastly, (3) Eco behavioral consultation is a framework of consultation that "examining her changing environment" (Kampwirth & Powers, 2012).

An egalitarian consultation is only possible if there is understanding about equal role and need of each collaborator. This is true, because as soon as one takes charge and lead directly for the judgment to be made, then the process become a

mere common consultation where a single expert is giving advice on his/her own without involving other contribution. However, it is worth to mention such a 'doctor-recipient' relation is an accepted approach, where the consultee is contributing by giving their information, while the consultant is providing them with some strategy to discuss the feasibility (Dettmer, Knackendoffel, & Thurston, 2013).

Moreover, such method might be a possible style of consultation in Indonesia. The process of consultation is when the parents or teachers arrive at the consultant office and asking for help. They seek guidance to the problem they have after failing to find their solution. Thus, their expectation is getting the answers. Subsequently, the consultant should fill the expectation while slowly build the understanding of the same important role of the consultee.

### **The Potential Advantages**

Collaborative Consultation is beneficial for both the client and the collaborators. Thousand and Villa (as cited in Idol et al., 1994) described the collaboration would produce a 'process gain,' a phenomenon where a collaborator insight a solution because absorbing knowledge from others. This condition occurred

because in the process, all of the members are sharing their expertise, thus, the dynamic will provide enhancement to the collaborators. Moreover, it helps the teacher to cope with the heavy work pressure by offering a safe environment for them to share their problem without being judged (Conoley & Conoley, 2010). It is an outstanding solution for the teacher, especially in the inclusive school. Evidently, most of the teacher experienced 'shock' from the unbalance condition between their responsibility, competency and the support from the school (Poernomo, 2016).

Beside of the consultee's gain, the client also receives merits from such collaboration since the best care is provided to them. Most research shows that students will have better achievement in the schools where collaboration is applied in their educational process (Cook & Friend, 2010). One distinctive feature of this method is the ability to address and anticipate "behavioral contrast" or "side effect" which is, "when the benefits of behavioral programming in one condition cause undesired effects under other conditions" (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

## The Obstacles of Collaborative Consultation

The main hindrance for a successful collaboration among consultants is the consultants themselves. The process of consultation requires a shared responsibility and cooperation amongst collaborators. It may difficult for some of them, who perceive such teamwork as a waste of time or having no internalized goals. Thus, the common aims of the collaboration should be initially negotiated by the collaborators, so they understand their role in the consultation.

Beside of the consultants' sincere participation, a competent consultant should also consider the the cultural or social obstacle in the process. Norms and social beliefs of the individuals of collaborator and the student will determine strategies used (Ingraham & Meyers, 2000).Many teachers witnessed problems of managing an inclusive class. Teachers may have to understand that not every parent is able to accept the fact that their children have special needs since the social burden of having 'abnormal' children are too much. It seems most teacher stops the effort to help such student, and instead falsified the marks, so it is enough to make the students graduate; a standard and shared solution

practiced from teacher to student with special needs in Indonesia.

It is just a fact that family is a significant factor that affecting the student performance because they are the first who could identify a problem. They are also the closest friend who could support their kids in the home, so a consultant ought to involve them in the problem-solving process (Lyons, Mickelson, Sullivan & Coyne, 1998). It is important to regard the family as equal as the consultant to ensure an effective collaboration take place. Neglecting this point, may result in family becoming obstacles which subsequently preventing the consultants to proceed the collaboration process.

The other obstacle is the complexity of the problems of students with special needs. As we understand, there are three aspects of students that need to be developed. They are cognitive, physical and socio-emotional aspect and they are interconnected. For instance, a blind student may face challenges to grasp visual information since his or her eyes, the physical aspect, is impaired. The student may also suffer from incapability to capture human's expression, thus limiting their social interaction. The case may be different for students with

wheelchair. Although they may not experience the stimulus hindrance, but they can easily look on demeaning mimics from the surroundings. They also need specific building support such as lift. From two limited cases presented here, it is hard to imagine the teachers and administrations could act promptly to provide an adequate service for each problem promptly.

Furthermore, teachers may be reluctant for a reform in inclusive education for many factors. Sheehy & Budiyanto (2014) for instance, report that in some cases it is complex for teachers to weigh one matter. In their research, generally, teachers are less favorable to use sign language to deaf students since it means showing the students' weakness. This good intention action may result in negative repercussions; thus, teachers experience dilemma in such situation. In this paper, we offer communication as the foundation of solution. It also part of the framework of collaborative consultation.

### **The Ways Responding Challenges**

Communication is the basic factor to overcome the challenges. The outcomes of the consultation are affected by how the communication can happen openly, intensely and frequently between the collaborators (Dettmer & Thurston, 2013;

Idol & West, 1987). An excellent communication climate in the team will make the process of addressing the problem faster as every member of collaborators contribute on designing assessment strategies.

A consultant should understand on how the social interaction between the client and consultants are limited. Only by doing so, then find he or she can find a way to collaborate under the common ground. In the case of Indonesia, it is important to look at religion value of Islam as most of the population is Muslim, and the country has a long history of adapting the values. It is advised for consultation might to be conducted in spiritual places such as mosque, where people come to do the prayer and also to organize most activities after.

Secondly, the role of the consultant is appeared not as important as other school position or related job in Indonesia. The role of the consultant could be added to the job description of Vice Principal of Student Affair or the internal counselor, which believed as the most appropriate person in charge to be the 'doctor.'

### **Promoting Collaborative Consultation**

The dissemination of collaborative consultation should first be conducted in the community of academia and public

institutions. It is to attract a bigger attention of universities as the backbone of innovation and government as the resource provider. Both sectors play key role in shaping the policy and the agenda for the future. Subsequently, the process of consultation should be commenced within the daily practice of schooling, from the teacher-teacher and teacher-parent relation at the school parent panels then is extended on some occasion to a deeper discussion in the consultation with a government appointed expert.

There are many ways to promoting Collaborative Consultation. The author suggests creating an academic trend in the topic. It is possible to do by the following actions: (1) Translating textbooks of collaborative consultation, since the literature around this topic seems to be very rare and it is more convenient for students or researchers to access the literature in Bahasa (2) conducting seminars and research discussion, it prompts a massive interest from publics for the adaptation and the innovation of collaborative consultation in our cultural settings(3) Organize consultation training to teachers to equip them with necessary skills to implement the concept in the school practices.

Next important steps are for the government to act accordingly. The administration would be hoped to pass legislation which describe the role of consultant and give both school and parents some privilege to visit the consultant without fee charged. This will ensure the raise in number of the consultee with their problem to start the consultation process as there is no burden for them to come. It is important for the government to socially engineer the climate of education using policies, so it is more appropriate for the existence of the concept. It can be done by training the inclusive education teacher. A set of consultant-training framework is available (Idol & West, 1987; Briere, Simonsen, Sugai, & Myers, 2015), and mainly based on the communication skill since it allows an effective knowledge sharing take place.

Finally, we need to be cautious regarding the concept since it stems from the west culture where individualistic values are taken for granted. Thus, it is danger to mere diffuse to school the concept of collaboration in consultation while the concept is unfamiliar to most of the teacher and the school experts in Indonesia. Adaptation of the concept of collaborative consultation should be one of the focuses. It may also beneficial to

place the concept beside of religious value since the concerns for spiritual

## CONCLUSION

In sum, the initiative to promote collaborative consultation should come from education institution, either elementary or secondary of higher

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