

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Utopia for teachers is when they have a successful classroom in which students are found obedient to the teachers and eager to learn. Imagine how delighting it is if students do any task given right away without complaining because they know it is for the sake of their future. It is so ideal if whenever teacher pops a question, students actively raise their hand to speak their ideas. Based on the researcher's experience, students do not naturally do those desired behaviors. They need to be trained to engage themselves in learning and behave appropriately, such as listening and answering questions respectfully, obeying without complaining, or even lining up at the door of the classroom. Students tend to complain when they were given task to do and sometimes they kept their ideas deep down in the pit of their mind simply because they were unwilling to be the center of attention. These examples prevented teachers to know students' capability and performance and also deterred a dream come true – a successful classroom.

Most of the misbehaviors arise in the classroom because the students are craving for attention. Human was created as a social being who has the innate capacity to love and the need to be loved because God has loved them first. As Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests the need of attention and love as a part of human needs, the Bible commands man to love one another because indeed man needs to be loved. Isaiah 66:13 talks about how kids need assurance through the comfort that a mother must give to her child. Psychology confirms this truth by

proposing that to have a good mental health and good behavior, the basic thing children need is unconditional love from family (National Mental Health Association, n.d.). Children who feel unloved will ask for love in the most unloving ways, which causes them to act up at home or school. When there is one kid acting up in the classroom, it is possible to hinder the whole class to achieve a successful classroom.

One of the ways to achieve a successful classroom is by having students engaged in the classroom. It is undeniable that through engagement in learning students perform better in classroom. In 1997, Alexander, Entwisle, and Horsey (as cited in Institution on Community Integration, 2015) stated that having students engaged at school with learning is a key to improve students' performance and to prevent dropout. Seeing this from Biblical perspective, being engaged in learning also helps students to develop Christian values, such as obedience, perseverance, and respect among peers and adults.

The researcher observed two kindergarten classes at ABC school, which are K-2 and K-3. The students were so young and most of them did not even know how to greet teachers properly. They did what they wanted to do and were on task only if they wanted to. Some of them got distracted a lot in the class and ended up did not know what the instructions were for the next activity. Some of them mumbled shyly when they were asked questions by the teachers though they knew the answers and some of them were jealous when their friends performed better in the class and got praises. The events happened in the field showed that this class needs to work on being engaged positively. Also, the researcher felt that without being used to engage from their early age, students would become even more passive in

the classroom when they grow up. Though it is impossible to expect students to be a good learner every day, the researcher felt the need to find a way to increase students' engagement in the classroom by using positive reinforcements.

Once again, in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this need of love and attention is considered very important. Teacher can fulfill this basic need in the classroom by increasing students' engagement through positive reinforcements. By using this strategy, the researcher tried to give the students attention and love needed. The researcher hopes that positive reinforcements, in the form of 3D Star Sticker, bubble liquid, and Band-Aids, could help students to engage and perform better in class. Though there are pros and cons on using these positive reinforcements or rewards, the researcher strived to pay attention more to what students did well more than their misbehaviors. Thus, the researcher conducted a research entitled "*Increasing Students' Engagement in Learning Through Positive Reinforcements: A Classroom Action Research in K-2 and K-3 Class at ABC School*".

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the problem found, the researcher offered one related question:

- Can positive reinforcements engage students in learning?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Based on the problem statements, the purpose of the study is to see if positive reinforcements used by the researcher can engage students in learning.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is aiming to give practical benefits to all parties that are involved in this study.

#### **1.4.1 For students**

This study can encourage students to actively engaged in learning because it brings many long-life positive impacts, which will benefit them also in society. Being engaged in the classroom helps students perform better in class and learn good values, such as obedience and perseverance. Being engaged also helps students to focus more and commit to what they are doing. Within it, attentiveness to people and caring will be developed also by applying social reinforcements in the form of praise and encouraging words.

#### **1.4.2 For teachers**

This study helps teachers see how positive reinforcements are implemented and its impact on students' engagement. Students who are engaged will be more attentive and committed to learning, which will benefit the teachers too. Through this study, teachers are encouraged to find more ways to increase students' engagement in learning and vary the strategies.

#### **1.4.3 For the researcher**

This study motivates the researcher to always innovate in education field. Through this study, the researcher had a valuable experience by applying positive reinforcements in the classroom to help students engaged. The researcher also learned a lot from imperfect actions the researcher took. This research stimulates the researcher to always find an effective solution to the problems that might happen in the future. This research gives valuable experience in conducting a research too.

#### **1.4.4 For further study**

This study gives motivations for other researchers to always improve and find other alternatives that can be used to solve students' engagement problem.

From the limitations and imperfect actions researcher had done, the other researchers could learn from it as well to conduct a better research.

## **1.5 Definitions of Terms**

The definitions of the terms used in this research are listed as follows:

### **1.5.1 Students Engagement**

Students Engagement is defined as commitment to and investment in learning. Identification with learning and belonging at school are considered important in students' engagement. Engagement is associated with desired academic, behavioral, cognitive, and affective outcomes, such as persisting in school and graduating (Institution on Community Integration, 2015).

### **1.5.2 Positive Reinforcements**

In a book entitled *The Classroom Teacher's Survival Guide*, positive reinforcements or rewards are described as pleasant or desirable consequences that cause a behavior to be repeated (Partin, 2009, p. 36).