

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Motivation is considered to be a critical aspect of teaching and learning, since it influences what, when, and how we learn (Santrock, 2006a, p.414; Schunk, as cited in Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008, p.5).

Therefore, there has been a lot of research that has been conducted about motivation.

“Research into motivation and its impact on behaviour has made a valuable contribution to education by highlighting the importance of motivation in the learning process and also the different ways in which students’ motivation can affect their achievement.”

(Krause, Bochner, & Duchesne, 2006, p.260)

As a result, educators often want to ensure that students are motivated to do what is required of them (ibid, p.260).

This study is based on my field experience which took place from July to December 2009. In my last field experience, I was placed in a private Christian school located in Makassar, one of the big cities of Eastern Indonesia. At that time, I was assigned to teach Sociology for grade ten students.

At first, I honestly was not so sure about this because even though I took Social Studies specification as my study specialisation in the university, I had not learned about it much before - neither while studying in university nor in my previous education. I needed to teach my students sociology content while learning about it at the same time. This was not going to be an easy job.

Another challenging task is to teach grade 10 students. I had never taught grade ten students before. I was actually used to working in middle school and had no experience to teaching higher levels than that. In addition to that, this was also the first time for the students to learn Sociology. They had never learned about it before. Another extra challenge!

However, as a Christian teacher, I realized fully that I am required to do my best in everything that I do for the students whom God entrusted me to teach in my classroom because each of them is a candidate inhabitant of God's Kingdom and do deserve the very best education that can be offered (Knight, 1998, p. 197; Isaiah 43: 4). At such a critical time, I was grateful that God gave me the wisdom of where to start. He made me realize that I am teaching the **students** and not merely teaching the **subject**. Therefore, recognizing the characteristics of the students was the first thing that I did.

Considering the fact that I did not know them before, I tried to get as much information that I could get from other teachers there. Fortunately, they were so helpful in that. From the informal talks, I got the information that the students in this school had special characteristics that distinguish them from any other students that I had ever taught.

In general, the students mostly come from wealthy business families who influenced their children to also see everything from a business perspective. It is all about benefits or loss. As the result, they are always asking what kind of benefits that they would get from doing or giving up certain things. That principle above also applied when they were in the classroom. Oftentimes, based on the

information from some teachers there, giving rewards has been the most effective way to deal with them.

In addition to that, the majority of their parents were still being conservative in their views of the importance of education. Most of them believed that their children only need to have an education up through high school. After that, the children would be the successor to the family business and that is enough to make them earn a good living in their future.

Those parents' perspectives about education somehow also affected the motivation of the students in learning. Most of them felt that there is no use for them achieving high goals in education, since they believe that they would not have the chance to take higher education later on. Furthermore, some of them thought that way because they considered that they already had bright futures by having all the money and comfortable living as they do now. Therefore, it is not so surprising when they stated that their target is only to pass the minimum standard.

Since they were enjoying their lives so much, they did not even have the intention to improve it. This also applied in the learning process. In addition to that, most of them had low intrinsic motivation to learn, especially in Social Studies subjects. The evidence of that becomes clearer as the specialisation division (in Indonesia, high school students are required to choose their study specialisation – Science or Social Studies program), which was held at the end of the semester, showed that approximately seventy-five percents of the students chose to be in the Science program, rather than in the Social Studies program.

I believe that one of the main factors influencing this situation is the fact that most Indonesians still have the paradigm that Science program is far much better than the Social Studies program (M., Arief Achmad, 2008). Students who take the Science program are often regarded as smarter than the students who are taking the Social Studies program (SMA N 3 Jember, 2009). Socio-culturally, this paradigm has been planted in the students' minds which then affected the way they perceive and make a decision about anything related to Science-Social Studies.

From all the explanations that other teachers gave me, I found out that most of students there had little motivation to learn, especially for Social Studies subjects. This situation automatically affects how they perceive their learning in the classroom. As a result, most of the students there do not give their best effort in learning and the teachers there even regarded them as low-achiever students.

As a result, I then tried my best to improve their learning through my teaching in Sociology. Some of the ways to do so is by creating a classroom environment that is positive and supportive for students to learn, plus thinking carefully about the right methods to be used for teaching such this subject.

At first, I did not realize that I was actually using the strategy of implementing learning-focused classroom in my teaching. My intention was only on helping these students to learn better, firstly, by enhancing their motivation to learn. Later on, I realized its relevance to what I did and it then finally lead me into a further analysis of how I, as a teacher, could enhance students' motivation in learning by implementing a classroom environment called "learning-focused classroom".

Based on the above mentioned-problem this study intends to find out how the implementation of learning-focused classroom can enhance students' motivation to learn, specifically in Sociology subject as a part of Social Studies.

I truly hope that this study will help me to grow and learn how to be a better Christian teacher in the future who will be able to nurture my students in a supportive environment to be reflective, responsive, and responsible Disciples of Christ, which I believe is the core of Christian education (Van Brummelen, 1998, pp.2-3).

### **STATEMENTS ABOUT THE PROBLEM**

Based on the background of the problem above, there are several questions that I would like to investigate. I will use these questions to focus my analysis in this paper. Those are:

1. How does a **learning-focused** classroom influence students' **motivation** in learning?
2. What **problems** happened during the implementation of learning-focused classroom in the real teaching and learning process?
3. What are the **solutions** suggested for overcoming those problems in order to help the students learn better?

### **PURPOSES OF THE STUDY**

The purposes of this study are to:

1. Describe how learning-focused classroom enhances students' motivation in learning.

2. Analyze the problems that might hamper the application of learning-focused classroom in the real teaching and learning process.
3. Find several alternative solutions in overcoming the problems which appear in trying to establish a better learning for the students in the future.

## **BENEFITS OF THE STUDY**

The study will hopefully:

1. Provide the readers with some information about the implementation of learning-focused classroom in order to enhance students' motivation, along with alternative solutions suggested for overcoming the problems that might hamper the process of teaching and learning.
2. Inform teachers about some findings of this study based on the implementation of learning-focused classroom that might be helpful for them, especially in creating a better learning environment for the students.
3. Provide some considerations for education practitioners to implement a learning-focused classroom as one of the alternatives to enhance students' motivation in learning.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

1. **Learning-focused classroom:** A classroom environment that emphasizes students' effort, continuous improvement, and understanding (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007, p.337). This kind of classroom is more focused on the learning process itself, rather than focusing only on the end results.

2. **Motivation:** “A force that energizes, sustains, and directs one’s behavior towards a goal” (Brophy; Pintrich & Schunk, as cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2007, p. 298).
3. **Grade ten students:** Grade ten students are unique as they are in the phase of adolescence when a lot of changes are happening. These changes are including rapid physical growth (puberty), increasing capability of abstract and logical thought, developing personal ethics, the emergence of autonomy and independence, and to the importance of peer acceptance which is regarded as something that is really important in this phase of human development.
4. **Social Studies:** “The integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence” which is purposeful “to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world” (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 1994). Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study on such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences.
5. **Sociology:** “a study to examine the role of individuals, groups, and institutions and their relationship and responsibility to the common good, and to develop an understanding of the complexities of those relationships

resulting from the diversity of beliefs, values, and structures within and among them” (NCSS, 1994).

