THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION
AT PUBLIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN MALANG

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this study is to describe the implementation of life skills at public senior high schools in Malang. This study employed a survey design using questionnaire as the instrument. The instrument was distributed to the sample, English teachers in SMAN 3, SMAN 8, and SMAN 9 Malang. The findings show that English teachers have implemented life skills education in their class activities.

Keywords: implementation, life skill education

Education is filled with the practices that actually inhibit the process of improving students’ potential (Nurohman, 2008:123). The learning activity is filled with memorizing theories and formulas so that students can answer the questions at the exam and get the high score. This contradicts the aim of education that is said in the attachment of decree of minister of national education No. 22 year 2006 which states that the aim of education is to develop students’ potential, so that they become human who are faithful and obedient to God, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and democratic as well as responsible citizen. To achieve this, the government includes life skills in teaching learning process, so that students will have some basis in facing their problems.

The implementation of life skills education also refers to the government regulation No. 19 year 2005 article (13) which states that life skills education have to be included in the curriculum for the SMP/MTs/SMPLB, SMA/MA/SMALB, and SMK/MAK. Furthermore, it states that life skills education includes personal skills, social skills, academic skills, and vocational skills.

Life skills are the ability required for human to live his life well. Indonesian education system divides life skills into two: generic life skills and specific life skills. Generic life skills include personal skills (self awareness skill and thinking skill) and social skills, whereas specific life skills consist of academic skills and vocational skills (Anwar, 2006:28).

Self awareness skills are skills which make people realize that they are part of society and environment. They also realize that they have special positive and negative side inside them and make every side as a basis to improve their personality, so that they will give good contribution to their own selves and environment (Anwar, 2006:29). Nurrohman (2008:125) defines thinking skills as human’s ability in exploring his ability to solve any problem in his life. Thinking skills can include skills in getting information, processing it, and deciding the appropriate solving problem which will be applied in his problem. Thinking skills can be built up in teaching learning activity through student’s independence activity which can make students able to search, analyze, and use information to solve the problem they get.

Social skills are ability to express feelings or to communicate interests and desires to others (http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/encyclopedia, accessed on May 3, 2012). Teachers need to develop students’ social skills, including verbal and
nonverbal forms of communication in class activity. According to Devianti (2011:43) verbal communication skills include being able to determine the appropriate way to say at the appropriate time, being able to communicate in ways that are engaging, having a range of vocal tone and quality, and being able to speak in an educated but reasonably understandable manner. Devianti (2011:43) adds that the non verbal skills are as important as the verbal one, like in having behavior. These skills are also needed to be developed to create good relationship and cooperate with others since human cannot live alone.

Dorestiawati (2009:27) said that academic skills are important to people whose job is about thinking like a scientist. Academic skills cover skills in identifying variable, explaining certain phenomenon, formulating hypothesis, and having research to prove the hypothesis. Academic skills are needed to be inserted in teaching learning activity at school in order to give students provision of intellectual ability.

Anwar (2006:31) defines vocational skills as skills related to certain occupation in society. These skills are generally taught in vocational school (SMK). However, students in senior high school (SMA) need it too to support their job then. The example of vocational skill that is usually taught in senior high school is skill in mastering programs in computer.

The objective of this study is to describe the implementation of life skills education at public senior high schools in Malang. It deals with three aspects: English teachers’ perception on the implementation of life skills education in public senior high schools in Malang, the way they implement it, and the problem they face in implementing this program.

METHOD

This study employed survey design. Survey is used to describe opinion, attitude, perception, or choice of certain group or population (Latief, 2010:147). The population of this study was all English teachers at public senior high schools in Malang. From ten public senior high schools in Malang, the researcher took three schools as sample. In choosing these three schools, the researcher took some steps. First, listing all public senior high schools in Malang based on their rank in national exam 2010. Second, determining the schools into three groups; high, mid, and low rank group. Then the researcher randomly chose one school from each group. Finally researcher got three schools as sample; SMAN 3, SMAN 8, and SMAN 9 Malang.

The process of collecting data started from the third week of February 2012 to the fourth week of February 2012. The instrument used in this study was questionnaire. The questions in the questionnaire were written in Indonesian to make the respondents easy in interpreting the questions. The researcher distributed the questionnaire by administering it to all English teachers in sample schools.

All of the data collected through questionnaire was analyzed in using preparation, tabulation, and data interpretation. The preparation was conducted by checking the identification of the respondents and by checking completion of the data. The relevant data were arranged into systematic summaries which are connected each other based on the research problems. After finishing the preparation, the next step was making tabulation. The tabulation was made by
classifying the data based on the characteristics of the variables taken from the questionnaire, named coding. After that, the data collected were presented descriptively.

FINDINGS

Teachers’ Perception

The teachers’ perception in this study involves the teachers’ opinion concerning in-service training or workshop, the policy of implementation of life skills, insertion of life skills in English subject, and kind of life skills which can be applied in English subject.

In gaining new information about education, teachers join in-service/workshop or read any book/article, in this case about life skills education. Almost all of the teachers (92.86%) have joined in-service/workshop or read any book/article related to life skills education. Few of them (7.14%) never join any workshops or read a book about life skills education.

Description of teachers’ opinion on the implementation of life skills in senior high schools shows that all the teachers argue that it is important to implement life skills in senior high schools. They give many reasons toward their agreement on the policy, but the point of all the reasons is life skills education needs to be applied in senior high schools to prepare students, so that they are ready to get involved in society and face their future.

Looking at the importance of life skills education, teachers give their opinion on the insertion of life skills education in the English subject. Almost all the teachers (92.86%) say that life skills can be inserted in English subject. Only one teacher (7.14%) states that life skills cannot be inserted in English subject.

All respondents believe that personal skills (by 85.71%), social skills (by 85.71%), academic skills (by 71.43%), and vocational skills (by 50%) can be applied in the English subject. So, based on teachers’ perception which is shown in the percentage above, it is concluded that most English teachers believe that all kind of life skills can be applied in English class activities.

The Implementation of Life Skills

Personal Skills

Greeting and praying are common things in English classes. All respondents said that they deliver greeting and praying in class before and after teaching learning activities. Another common thing is checking students’ attendance. All respondents give the same answer.

All teachers discuss the criteria of scoring with the students. They believe that discussing scoring criteria with students can make the students aware of what to be scored, so that they can prepare themselves to get satisfying score. Besides, knowing the criteria makes students understand the reason of their score and avoiding being treated unfairly among students.

Social Skills

All the respondents of this study said that they built students’ confidence during teaching learning activities in English classes. They apply many ways to build students’ confidence. They usually give students motivation to be confident in class.

Activeness in English class activities often becomes criteria of scoring. All teachers briefly say that teachers had made students active in teaching learning
activities in English classes. They apply many ways to make students active. Most teachers say that they always try to speak English in any opportunity to make students speak English. Some teachers use fun activities to attract students to be active.

Group activities are usually done in English classes. More than half of the respondents (57.14%) often make students study in group in class activities. Almost half of them (42.86%) sometimes make students work in group activities. There are various ways in making groups of students. Based on their experience, the simple way becomes the choices of most teachers; they are based on the students’ choice, the students’ attendance list, lottery, and the chair where students sit. A few teachers (five respondents) also mention that sometimes they also decide the groups of students based on the ability they have. It means to equalize the ability of students group. A few of them (5 respondents) prefer to create groups in fun way such as counting number (students who get the same number became one group). In group activity, almost all teachers said that they paid attention to cooperation among students in group, activeness, time management, and they helped students when they faced problem.

Teachers have different idea on students’ involvement in scoring. Most teachers (78.57%) say that students need to be involved in scoring. Few of them (14.29%) mention that sometimes students need to be involved in scoring. One teacher states that students do not need to be involved in scoring. There are many reasons following the statements about a need of involving students in scoring. Involving students in scoring is also done to discuss the right answer. The other reason is, students can do self evaluation by themselves. Hopefully, they do not make the same mistakes.

In the past, all teaching materials were from teachers. Nowadays, some teachers involve their students in searching reading materials. Based on the questionnaire, it is known that almost all respondents (92.86%) say that students should be involved in searching reading material. Only one respondent (7.14%) says the opposite.

Problems and Solutions

There are some obstacles following the program of implementation of life skills education at public senior high schools. First, students do not realize the importance of life skills education. It happens because most students’ social and economical status has been high, so their needs have been fulfilled easily by their parents. They have not realized yet the importance of having skills to their future. Second, some students also have low motivation. This affects their commitment in studying and overcoming their lack in English subject. School facilities and environment become the third obstacles. Some schools do not have sufficient facility and environment to support teachers’ activities in teaching learning. The fourth obstacle is about the students themselves who are still lack in English. Many students think that English is a difficult subject, so they are reluctant to speak English.

DISCUSSION

Teachers’ Perception

Attachment of decree of minister of national education No.16 year 2007 about standard of academic qualificiation and teacher competence states teachers
are required to update their knowledge to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers can join workshop and read books or articles related to life skills. Almost all English teachers are active in joining seminar or workshop held by institutions for teachers so that teachers can get much knowledge related to life skills education.

Basically life skills can be inserted in any subject in senior high school. Self awareness skill, which is part of personal skills, has main purpose of developing people’s awareness to create good character. Teachers can develop this skill in English classes through teaching learning activities. For example, a teacher can lead students to pray before starting the lesson to develop self awareness that they are part of God’s creature and they always need God in their life.

Thinking skill to optimize people cognitives also can be developed in English classes. Thinking skill includes searching information, processing it, and making decision. For example, in searching material for short functional text, students can search information about short functional text; advertisement, announcement, and invitation. Then teacher can provide them many kinds of text including advertisement, announcement, and invitation. Based on the information that is looked for before, students can decide which text is advertisement, announcement, or invitation.

Social skills are ability to express feelings or to communicate interests and desires to others (http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/encyclopedia, accessed May 3, 2012). In education, social skills direct students to have good relation among them which then they can apply in real life to interact with society. Social skills can be sharpened through English class activities since they have similarity that is communication. In English subject, there are four main skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In English subject, students also learn how to communicate well. Teachers can exercise students’ ability in communicating through speaking. Communicating is not always related to speaking. People can also communicate and persuade others through writing like writing argumentative and persuasive text.

Academic skills deal with intelligent and science. Academic skills cover skills in identifying variable, explaining certain phenomenon, formulating hypothesis, and conducting research to prove the hypothesis. Here students learn how to be critical.

Vocational skills which are closely related to job or occupation deal with psychomotor skills. Students can earn money by having this skill. For examples chef needs cooking skill and engineer uses special skill in creating and fixing machines. This kind of skill is generally taught in SMK or vocational school. Senior high schools nowadays also sharpen the vocational skill of their students through extracurricular activities such as computer, sewing, cooking, etc. In English classes, there is no exact standard competence and basic competence which relates to vocational skill. So, this skill is difficult to be applied in English subject.

Based on the explanation above, kinds of life skills which can be inserted in English classes of senior high school are personal and social skills.
The Implementation of Life Skills

Greeting, praying, and checking students’ attendance are common things in class activities. Based on the findings, greeting and praying are always done by teachers to start and finish the lesson. Checking students’ attendance is always done too in every meeting. Self awareness skill refers to realizing that they are part of society and God’s creation (Anwar, 2006:29). By greeting, praying, and checking students’ attendance, they strengthen their awareness that all students are the same.

Another thing that teachers do to develop students’ self awareness skill is discussing the criteria of scoring with the students. By doing this, students feel being respected by teachers and their existence is clearly seen. Their opinions are listened to and they have part in concluding the criteria of scoring. Then, after knowing the criteria of scoring, students are aware of what to be scored, so they prepare better to get high scores. By this way, students’ awareness is sharpened.

Nurrohman (2008:125) defines thinking skill as human’s ability in exploring his ability to solve any problem in his life. Thinking skills can include skills in getting information, processing it, and deciding the appropriate solving problem to be applied to solve his problem. Findings show that teachers involve students in searching reading material. It is the example of the implementation of thinking skills. Here teachers give a chance to students to look for by themselves the information about text type and then search for the appropriate text. From this activity, students exercise their independence in gathering information. So, they do not depend on what teachers give them.

Thinking skills have been implemented in senior high schools, the findings show that teachers often involve students in scoring; checking their own answers or their friends’ answer. This sharpens their honesty about the wrong and the right answer. When the answer is wrong, students should write it wrong and when the answer is correct, students should add it to the score. In this case, teachers also trust students to give the appropriate score. So students learn to be responsible on the score they made and they are more careful in deciding the score. This is how they sharpen personal skills, especially thinking skills.

Social skills are needed when we make a relation with others. People are judged by what they say, when they say, and how they say. Findings display that teachers discuss the criteria of scoring with students in class. It shows that teachers exercise students’ communication skill. In giving opinion about the scoring criteria, students cannot just speak. They have to have reason behind what they say in class.

Confidence is important in life. When people say or do something, they need confidence. If they do not have confidence, they cannot make others trust in what they say or do. This confidence is also built by English teachers in classes. Realizing the importance of confidence to the students, teachers sharpen students’ confidence in classes. They exercise it by making students active in classes. When students have confidence, they are easily involved in class activities. Then when they are active in class, they should have confidence with them. It can be seen in class when there is a question to students related to material being learnt. When a student has similar answer to other’s but he feels uncertain about his answer, he is afraid to have the wrong answer and so he will be shy. Finally he will just keep his answer and let others answer it. Another student who also feels uncertain
about his answer, will think that being wrong is not a big problem. So he will just try to answer it with his confidence.

The findings mention that teachers often make group activities in their class. When group activities are conducted, what to be paid attention is cooperation or collaboration. Collaboration skill is needed by all people in this world. In daily life people need to collaborate with each other. Collaboration does not only refer to working together, but also involves understanding, respecting, and helping each other. Besides learning about collaboration, group activities also make students learn about leadership and accepting differences. When they conduct group activities, one student takes part to explain something to others. Here they learn about the leadership. Then of course there is different opinion among the members of group. They learn how to respect others’ opinion and accept the conclusion well although it is not their opinion.

Problems and Solutions

Teachers’ problem in implementing life skill at senior high school in Malang mostly comes from the students. First students’ awareness to the importance of life skills to their life in future is low because most students’ economical status is high. It is easy for them to get their needs. On their age, teenagers have unstable emotion and full of egoism (Lestari, 2005).

The next problem from the students is their low English skill which discourages them to learn English.

The third problem is school facility and environment. Facility makes the process of learning run smoothly and helps achieve the objective of learning easier. So, facility is important in conducting teaching learning activities. Environment also influences the success of learning. Environment here refers to the place and situation to students to learn well. Learning environment should be quiet, clean, and comfortable. By having the good environment, the objective of learning would be achieved easily.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Dealing with the teachers’ perception on the implementation of life skills, it can be concluded that teachers at public senior high schools in Malang agree with the policy. Related to the implementation of life skills in class activities, teachers have implemented life skills in their teaching learning activities from the pre-activity to post-activity. This study discovered the problems and solutions that come up when life skills are implemented. This study can be used as an evaluation for the teachers to conduct a better implementation of life skills education.

It is recommended that teachers vary the class activities to implement life skills, so that students can sharpen their skills in many ways. Workshop about life skills education needs to be conducted for teachers to have deeper understanding about it. The students of English department of state university of Malang, are suggested to create interesting class activities which they can apply to their students in the future. The last is for future researchers, it is suggested to investigate other elements about life skills education to have wider scope of the subject of the study like analyzing the technique and material used by the teacher toward the implementation of life skills in the class or the effect of life skills education toward students’ daily life.
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