

The Spirituality of Elementary School Teachers in Indonesia in Teaching Visual Arts

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ABSTRACT

Art education in Indonesian elementary schools is often perceived as less important by policymakers and curriculum developers compared to core subjects such as mathematics, science, and English. Consequently, art teachers frequently conduct visual arts classes without full engagement or alignment with the intended learning objectives, limiting students' holistic development. This study aims to explore how action-based interventions can enhance elementary school teachers' spirituality and teaching effectiveness in visual arts. Employing an Action Research approach, the study involved visual arts teachers who participated in a series of teaching interventions, followed by structured reflection and evaluation sessions to assess changes in their teaching practices and spiritual engagement. The results indicate that after undergoing the intervention and reflection processes, teachers demonstrated a significant increase in spiritual awareness, creativity, and meaningful interaction with students during art lessons. These findings suggest that structured interventions and reflective practices can strengthen teachers' internal motivation and commitment, fostering a more spiritually enriched teaching environment. The study highlights the potential of integrating teacher spirituality into pedagogical strategies to improve the quality of art education, thereby contributing to the broader educational goals of character building, creativity, and holistic student development in Indonesian schools.

Keywords: Elementary School Teachers, Visual Arts Learning, Action Research, Student Character Development

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the need for creative and innovative human resources is increasing to face the transition period from the phenomenon of an industrial society to an information society (Hazarika, 2022). Fine Arts Education makes students knowledgeable by exploring and honing their skills in critical thinking, creativity, confidence, and cultural awareness (Duran et al., 2021). In addition, the benefits of fine arts education for elementary school students will be able to help them become successful as a multi-talented and multi-skilled generation (Conway, 2019). Learning fine arts can provide non-academic benefits to students such as developing confidence, motivation, aesthetics, cultural awareness, creativity, emotional expression, and social harmony as well as appreciating diversity (Khan & Ali, 2016).

Teachers should develop subject materials and methods for their students (Valverde Pérez et al., 2022). The professional development of teachers in fine arts education includes expanding and deepening art knowledge and skills as well as further developing professional, personal, and subject-specific competencies necessary for the efficient implementation of fine arts learning (Novakovic, 2017). This is difficult to implement because the fact is that in schools, especially in elementary schools, teachers are required to teach all subjects. As Parsad & Spiegelman (2013) noted, in 'Western' countries alone, 28% of all lessons are taught by a teacher.

In Indonesia, learning fine arts in schools, especially in elementary schools, is positioned as a subject that is considered less important due to the lack of understanding from education policymakers. The impact on teachers is the same assumption, namely that the subject of fine arts is not an important subject (Lim & Richardson, 2023). Teachers in elementary schools still think that important subjects are mathematics, science (Natural Sciences), Indonesian, and so on. According to Tomljenović & Novaković (2019), fine arts teachers rarely participate in professional training. Therefore, it is considered necessary to develop professional training for teachers to teach fine arts in elementary schools.

The education system in Indonesia should balance the ability in the fields of logic, ethics, and aesthetics. The fact that happens today is that the portion of art subjects as part of aesthetic abilities is very small (Putri et al., 2022). This may be due to a lack of understanding of the role or potential of arts education by most people and policymakers. As a result, the implementation of art learning in schools is mostly carried out unprofessionally (Hendrastomo & Purwanta, 2023). Art teachers, including fine arts teachers, do not have an art education background. Therefore, it is considered necessary to make serious efforts so that teachers are motivated to develop their competencies. Art teachers in schools are seen as needing to be given spirit so that they want to have the motivation to teach correctly in accordance with the goals of learning art in school (Putri et al., 2022).

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of fine arts education in developing students' creativity, critical thinking, confidence, and cultural awareness (Hazarika, 2022; Conway, 2019). Khan and Ali (2016) further demonstrated that fine arts learning can foster non-academic outcomes such as social harmony, emotional expression, and appreciation for diversity. However, these studies predominantly focus on the benefits for students and do not sufficiently address the role of teacher preparedness and professional development in realizing these outcomes. Conversely, research by Novakovic (2017) and Valverde Pérez et al. (2022) emphasizes the need for teachers to enhance their subject knowledge and pedagogical competencies but provides limited insight into practical interventions for motivating elementary school teachers in countries like Indonesia, where fine arts are often marginalized and undervalued (Tomljenović & Novaković, 2019).

By implementing structured guidance, reflection, and teaching interventions, this research aims to provide teachers with the knowledge, confidence, and internal drive needed to deliver high-quality art education. The study is intended to support the professional growth of art teachers and ensure that elementary school students receive meaningful, skill-enhancing art instruction, contributing to the development of a multi-talented, culturally aware, and creative generation.

METHOD

This research uses the Action Research method, which is research conducted through stages: plan actions, take action, make observations and evaluations, and carry out reflections (Taniredja et al., 2010). The researcher took a sample of 304 elementary school teachers who serve in West Java Province, Indonesia. The sampling technique uses purposive sampling, where the researcher has provided a thorough assessment of the subjects who will participate and be representative of the population.

Data were collected through questionnaires, observation sheets, and reflective journals to capture teachers' professional motivation, teaching practices, and spiritual engagement in visual arts education. The data sources included the sampled teachers, school administrators, and documentation of teaching activities. Collected data were analyzed using a combination of quantitative techniques, including descriptive statistics and percentage analysis, and qualitative techniques, such as thematic analysis, to identify patterns, changes, and reflections in teacher behavior and attitudes throughout the intervention process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Problem of Elementary School Teachers in Teaching Fine Arts

The results of preliminary research surveys that have been conducted on elementary school teachers in Indonesia, especially in West Java Province, are very worrying. The students are given art learning that does not lead to the proper learning objectives, in fact they are only given knowledge. Even though the concept of art education is a sense education, therefore students must be given drawing practice learning that is relevant to the concept of art education, which reaches the realm of knowledge, skills and character development. The illustration below shows that teachers only aim to develop knowledge competencies.



Figure 1. How teachers teach drawing on aspects of knowledge

In fine arts lessons, Students are not taught enough to appreciate works of art, but must be involved in expression or art creation (Simpson Steele, 2017). When teachers were asked why they did not teach drawing practices relevant to their learning objectives, the teachers' answers were not confident. This is because when they attended education, they did not learn much about fine arts (only 2 credits).

Self-confidence is a mental attitude of optimism from one's ability to solve oneself in the situation faced (Surya in Aristiani, 2016). Confidence in learning can increase participation, comfort, and foster interest (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020). In addition, a teacher's self-confidence depends on affective factors such as social and environmental factors that motivate him or her (Alam et al., 2021).

A very important indicator related to teachers, namely those who have confidence to teach is to carry out learning activities without hesitation, not easily despair when encountering difficulties, having a sense of comfort or fun, and strengthening motivation and interest. That is what is meant by the spirituality of teachers in teaching. Teacher spirituality is a deep awareness and belief that will provide high motivation in teaching.

The spirituality of elementary school teachers in teaching fine arts is manifested in being an example of spiritual values, integrating spiritual values in the learning materials and process, and providing guidance and motivation that creates a fun and positive learning atmosphere for students. This is done by developing students' creativity, empathy, and aesthetics so that they can form a complete personality in accordance with the goals of national education.

Research Implementation

Action Planning

Teachers' motivation to teach can improve their performance so that it will have an impact on achieving learning goals (Rapu et al., 2021). At the action planning stage, elementary school teachers are given motivation, so that it is indicated that their attitude of courage to experiment with drawing is indicated. They were given examples of simple drawings or pictures to appreciate. It was explained to the teachers that there is nothing wrong or right about drawing like math lessons or similar lessons, but in drawing there is only good or bad in drawing.



Figure 2. Researchers motivate teachers to dare to draw

Giving Action

Teachers have an important role to create a comfortable learning atmosphere (Aryati et al., 2020). That is why, among other things, this drawing activity is recognized outdoors. Armed with the knowledge that drawing is neither right nor wrong, they begin to dare to draw. Their drawing activities are done in the classroom and outside the classroom or in open spaces, this is done so that they feel comfortable and fun.

Researchers who act as motivators as well as action givers give teachers the freedom to express their drawings. Researchers do not criticize when they are in the process of drawing, but are given directions to be bold and without hesitation in expressing their ideas. This is what is called the exploratory learning model.



Figure 3. Teachers experiment with drawing indoors and outdoors

Observation and Evaluation

The work of the teachers was then exhibited. This exhibition activity is an important activity in learning fine arts, because they appreciate each other or judge each other's works. Then they discussed to find learning methods or models that are relevant to the goals of learning fine arts in elementary school.

Through the exhibition activities, it seems that the teachers are more confident that they feel that they can work in drawing. Unconsciously, drawing techniques were discovered by them themselves through an exploratory learning process. Evaluation in this activity is indirectly carried out between them or what is commonly called peer assessment.



Figure 4. Exhibition of teachers' drawings and discussions

Reflection

- a. Most teachers, after being given action, become confident to dare to draw. Their drawing works vary, from the least good to the best, most of the drawing works are still not good. But the teachers were given motivation and direction that the more often they draw, the better the quality.
- b. Furthermore, the most basic question when teachers teach art education lessons is "what do teachers teach when teaching art lessons?, is teaching practice in accordance with the learning objectives? (Hawari & Noor, 2020). This question was answered when the teachers discussed.
- c. Teachers play an important role in encouraging students to be creative (Machali et al., 2021). Before carrying out creative learning, students should be given the learning to appreciate works of art others. Teachers must choose examples of works that are considered important, meaningful and easy understood by students (Vahter, 2012). That is why, when teachers are given action, they should dare to be creative in drawing. Thus, the attitude of teachers who are brave and confident to be creative will be transferred to their students.
- d. Basically, the characteristics of fine arts lessons in school are fun lessons. When teachers are given actions for learning to draw, there is a pleasant attitude in them. Teachers believe that they are fun, especially elementary school students. But teachers are considered necessary to find learning approaches that are relevant to the characteristics of fine art subjects.
- e. Referring to research findings Hawari & Noor (2020), that one of the approaches relevant to the purpose of art learning is Project Based Learning (PBL). The PBL approach to the process is student-centered, dynamic classroom management and can develop creativity. However, there are things that are considered necessary to be considered in the learning process with the PBL approach, namely choosing relevant rubrics or assessments and developing the content of teaching materials that are in accordance with the main learning objectives.

CONCLUSION

Teachers who are in charge of teaching fine arts lessons in elementary schools, after being given an understanding and practice of drawing with exploratory methods, become highly spiritual. They have the belief that teaching fine arts to elementary school students is not difficult and believe that elementary school students who receive appropriate fine arts learning will find it enjoyable. Elementary school teachers understand that the purpose of learning art in elementary school is not for students to become artists or painters, but the main goal is to develop students' character, such as being confident, creative, critical, honest, tolerant, and culturally aware.

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