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Implementation of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Approach in Pancasila Education to Strengthen the Character of Discipline and Responsibility at SMAN 1 Nusa Penida, Klungkung Regency

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in Pancasila education to strengthen students' character of discipline and responsibility at SMAN 1 Nusa Penida. Using a qualitative case study method, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. The results indicate that TaRL improves students' discipline and responsibility by providing structured learning tailored to their understanding levels. However, challenges such as limited diagnostic assessments, inadequate facilities, and low student motivation were found. Supporting factors include a conducive learning environment, active teacher involvement, parental support, flexible policies, and sufficient learning resources. Overall, TaRL is an effective strategy to foster discipline and responsibility in students.

Keyword: Teaching at the Right Level, Discipline, Responsibility, Pancasila Education, SMAN 1 Nusa Penida.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in advancing a nation. Through education, young generations are shaped into intelligent individuals, both intellectually and morally (Gardner, 2021). Education is not limited to academic aspects; it also fosters cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities (Ulfah & Arifudin, 2021). A well-rounded education enables individuals to lead meaningful lives and contribute positively to their communities. The ultimate goal of education is to nurture individuals who are beneficial to society, the nation, and the state. Education not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates strong character and personality. It helps individuals understand their roles in various aspects of life, including social, economic, cultural, and political spheres. Adaptability, critical thinking, and collaboration are also developed through the educational process (Damon, 2013).

Ki Hadjar Dewantara formulated the purpose of education as a means to guide the natural potentials inherent in every child (Noventari, 2020). Education not only fosters intelligence but also prepares individuals to achieve the highest level of happiness and safety (Wiryo Pranoto et

al., 2017). This idea gave rise to the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn), which emphasizes the freedom of students to learn according to their interests and potential (Maisyaroh et al., 2021). An education system that respects the individuality and unique potentials of each learner becomes a pillar in strengthening character and identity, as well as a medium for preserving local culture (Riyanti et al., 2022).

One of the main principles of the *Merdeka Belajar* concept is its student-centered approach. Teachers are expected to go beyond being mere instructors and become facilitators who understand diverse learning needs and personally guide their students (Yuli et al., 2023). However, in practice, differences in students' backgrounds—social, economic, cultural, and academic—pose particular challenges to creating inclusive learning environments.

In SMAN 1 Nusa Penida, the formation of disciplined and responsible character among students has not been optimal. Attendance records indicate that 35% of students are frequently late, while task completion data shows that 40% of students fail to submit assignments on time. Some students demonstrate a lack of awareness regarding academic responsibilities, indicating weak internalization of character values within the learning process.

Traditional teaching methods, which tend to be one-directional, have not provided sufficient space for students to apply the values of discipline and responsibility in real-life contexts. The *Teaching at the Right Level* (TaRL) approach emerges as a potential solution to bridge this gap. TaRL aims to tailor learning to students' actual proficiency levels, enabling them to grow according to their potential and specific learning needs (Ismail & Zakiah in Saputro, 2024). By focusing on students' needs, this approach is expected to be more effective in instilling discipline and responsibility.

However, the implementation of TaRL in SMAN 1 Nusa Penida still faces challenges, particularly in diagnostic observation and the design of learning strategies tailored to students' characteristics. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the implementation of the *Teaching at the Right Level* approach in strengthening students' character, particularly discipline and responsibility, at SMAN 1 Nusa Penida. This approach is chosen because it is believed to bridge academic needs and character development simultaneously (Ismail et al., 2024).

Based on the background above, the research question of this article is: How is the *Teaching at the Right Level* (TaRL) approach implemented in strengthening the character of discipline and responsibility among students at SMAN 1 Nusa Penida?

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method conducted at SMAN 1 Nusa Penida, Bali. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Pancasila teachers and students, classroom observations, and documentation studies. The validity of the data was tested through triangulation. The data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative technique to explore the implementation of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in strengthening students' discipline and responsibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

State Senior High School 1 Nusa Penida is located in Nusa Penida District, Klungkung Regency, Bali Province. Geographically, Nusa Penida is an island situated southeast of Bali Island, separated by the Badung Strait. The region's hilly terrain and its surrounding seas make transportation to and from the island reliant on sea routes. These geographical challenges underscore the critical role of SMAN 1 Nusa Penida in providing educational services to the local community.

SMAN 1 Nusa Penida was established on April 25, 1991, based on the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 0363/O/1991. Since its founding, SMAN 1 Nusa Penida has undergone continuous development in various aspects, including the improvement of facilities, the quality of teaching staff, and the overall standard of education. The school's

vision is to cultivate intelligent and virtuous individuals who excel in achievement, in alignment with the profile of Pancasila students and the principles of Tri Hita Karana. Its mission focuses on providing a conducive learning environment, fostering character development, and promoting environmental sustainability.

SMAN 1 Nusa Penida is committed not only to academic excellence but also to character development. Through the implementation of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) in Pancasila and Civic Education, the school strives to instill values of discipline and responsibility among its students. Character education programs, social activities, and project-based learning are incorporated to cultivate a generation of students with integrity who are prepared to face future challenges. With these strengths, the school continuously strives to enhance educational quality and produce graduates who excel both academically and in character.

The Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach is a teaching method that aligns instructional content with students' levels of understanding. Based on Jean Piaget's constructivist learning theory, effective learning must adapt to students' cognitive development stages (Piaget, 1976). Additionally, Carl Rogers' humanistic learning theory emphasizes the importance of addressing individual students' needs, including character development. In the context of discipline, Edward L. Thorndike's habit formation theory is also relevant, suggesting that consistent habituation can shape student character, including discipline. Through the TaRL approach, students are gradually accustomed to learning according to their understanding, which in turn fosters disciplined learning behavior (Efendi, 2016).

An interview with Mr. IMK was conducted on December 20, 2024, at 10:30 AM. Mr. IMK, a Pancasila and Civic Education teacher at SMAN 1 Nusa Penida, explained that the TaRL approach was introduced in line with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Interview Results, December 20, 2024).

To implement the TaRL approach, Mr. IMK outlined several stages to ensure its effectiveness in the classroom:

1. Lesson Module Development

Teachers develop instructional modules based on TaRL principles, allowing lessons to be delivered progressively according to students' levels of understanding.

2. Student Grouping

Students are grouped according to their comprehension of the material. This strategy aims to create a more targeted learning experience and support students' academic growth.

3. Differentiated Content Delivery

Each student group receives material tailored to their abilities. This ensures students not only learn according to their level of understanding but are also challenged to enhance their critical thinking skills.

4. Use of Innovative Teaching Methods

Teachers apply various engaging teaching methods, such as interactive discussions, visual aids, and digital technologies to increase student participation in learning.

5. Reflection and Feedback

Teachers regularly reflect on learning outcomes and provide students with feedback, which serves not only to assess understanding but also to motivate students to improve their learning capacity.

According to Mr. IMK, the main method used in the TaRL approach is Problem-Based Learning (PBL). This method allows students to learn through solving real-life problems. It encourages critical thinking, collaboration in groups, and exploration of multiple solutions. Furthermore, it helps students develop essential communication and teamwork skills, contributing to their overall character development (Interview Results, December 20, 2024).

Interview findings revealed that most ninth-grade students had not yet fully grasped the concept of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL). Several students expressed that the teaching methods remained generalized and did not take into account their individual levels of understanding. One participant (IPEWP) stated that the teacher delivered lessons in the same manner to all students, without distinguishing their varying levels of comprehension. As a result, those who had already understood the material found the lessons too easy, while others struggled to keep up. Another participant (IKORE) noted that the teacher's approach to teaching Pancasila Education did not reflect the differentiated instruction that TaRL advocates, as all students received the same treatment regardless of their capabilities. Similarly, IKPP affirmed that the teacher applied a uniform teaching style to all students, making it difficult for some to follow the lesson. These testimonies suggest that, although TaRL aims to group students based on their understanding levels, its actual implementation in the classroom remains suboptimal.

An essential component of the TaRL approach is conducting diagnostic assessments prior to instruction in order to group students appropriately. However, the interviews indicated that most students had never experienced such diagnostic observations. Participants reported that their teachers often began teaching without conducting any form of preliminary assessment. NKD expressed that no diagnostic observation was conducted prior to instruction; instead, the teacher went straight into the material without any tests to gauge students' understanding. Similarly, DGAYS shared that teachers typically began lessons without considering students' initial capabilities. IKDP echoed this concern, stating that teachers usually taught without conducting any diagnostic assessment beforehand. The absence of such assessments poses a significant challenge in implementing TaRL effectively, as it increases the risk of mismatched grouping, where students with different levels of understanding remain in the same instructional group.

One of the expected outcomes of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) is the cultivation of discipline and responsibility among students through tailored learning strategies. However, interview data suggest that this objective has not been fully achieved. Some students reported that the approach had not significantly improved their self-discipline or sense of responsibility. IGBAP, for instance, observed that students who struggled to grasp the material tended to lose motivation, thereby impeding the development of disciplined learning habits. Similarly, NKNW noted that learners with comprehension difficulties often became passive and neglected their assignments. Ni Kadek Radisty added that rather than instilling responsibility, the method sometimes led students to feel discouraged and disengaged due to the perceived difficulty of the lessons. Consequently, several students showed reduced participation and failed to submit their work punctually.

Although adapting learning materials to students' levels of understanding is a core tenet of TaRL, interview findings revealed limited application of this principle in practice. I Dewa Made Krisna Wipayana reported that teachers generally provided uniform materials to all students without adjusting instruction according to individual comprehension levels. This lack of differentiation led to difficulties in understanding certain topics. Ni Kadek Radisty confirmed this observation, stating that no adjustments were made for differences in students' academic abilities. Likewise, I Ketut Okta Rahma Endra shared that the lessons did not align with his understanding, as the teacher had not mapped student abilities prior to instruction. These insights highlight several implementation barriers of TaRL in Grade IX classrooms, particularly in diagnostic assessment, instructional differentiation, and character development outcomes.

In theory, TaRL organizes students into groups based on their mastery of material, a practice consistent with social learning theory, which emphasizes the role of peer interaction in knowledge acquisition (Yunuardianto, 2019). Grouping students appropriately can facilitate peer-assisted learning and promote more disciplined study habits. Teacher and student interviews at SMAN 1 Nusa Penida affirmed that TaRL can indeed foster discipline when implemented effectively. Teachers highlighted the method's flexibility in delivering material

according to students' cognitive readiness—a practice aligned with differentiation theory, which advocates for learning at an individual's zone of proximal development (Yuli et al., 2023).

Educators implementing TaRL noted that grouping students by their comprehension levels enabled them to design targeted, effective teaching strategies. This not only enhanced lesson clarity but also increased student engagement, responsibility in completing assignments, and intrinsic motivation to learn. Such outcomes resonate with constructivist theory, which posits that knowledge is best acquired when learning activities are tailored to students' developmental stages (Piaget, 1976).

Moreover, TaRL supports more intensive student-teacher and peer interaction, fostering a dynamic and conducive classroom environment. These interactions not only improve academic understanding but also instill disciplined learning behaviors such as punctuality, task completion, and adherence to classroom instructions. These effects support the principles of active learning, which emphasizes student involvement as essential to improved comprehension and discipline (Shodi, 2021).

Beyond discipline, TaRL has also been observed to boost students' learning motivation. When instruction is aligned with their current level of understanding, students tend to feel more confident and comfortable engaging with the content. This finding is consistent with Deci and Ryan's theory of intrinsic motivation, which holds that motivation increases when learners feel competent and autonomous in their learning process (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Tailored instruction can make the learning process more engaging and reduce anxiety caused by cognitive mismatches in traditional classrooms. In line with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, well-structured social interactions further encourage deeper exploration and understanding (Liu & Matthews, 2005).

The integration of TaRL into Pancasila and Civic Education at SMAN 1 Nusa Penida has shown promise in enhancing both discipline and learning motivation. By organizing students according to their understanding, the method enables the creation of more conducive and inclusive learning environments. The incorporation of interactive strategies such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL) further amplifies these benefits, fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and student accountability.

Nevertheless, the success of TaRL implementation depends not only on student grouping but also on the proactive role of teachers in adapting and applying appropriate instructional methods. Ongoing professional development is thus essential to support teachers in effectively implementing TaRL, ensuring that the approach contributes meaningfully to improving educational quality and student character formation.

Despite its benefits, the application of TaRL remains uneven due to several critical challenges. One major issue is the lack of comprehensive diagnostic assessments before grouping students. Without accurate baseline data, students may be placed in groups that do not match their abilities, which can demotivate struggling students and fail to challenge more advanced learners. Black and Wiliam (1998) stress the importance of formative assessments in identifying learning gaps and informing instruction; however, many teachers are constrained by limited time and resources in conducting these evaluations (Brookhart, 2011).

Another significant obstacle is the inadequacy of educational facilities. Teachers often lack access to essential resources such as projectors, up-to-date textbooks, and digital tools, which hampers differentiated instruction. In many schools—especially in under-resourced areas insufficient technological infrastructure limits the full implementation of TaRL principles.

Equally pressing is the issue of teacher readiness. Many educators are still reliant on traditional teaching methods that emphasize uniform content delivery, regardless of students' varying comprehension levels (Darling-Hammond, 2017). This pedagogical rigidity presents a barrier to adopting more adaptive, student-centered approaches like TaRL.

Resistance from students and parents further complicates implementation. Students accustomed to conventional, teacher-centered instruction may find it difficult to adjust to TaRL's active, problem-based learning format. Without adequate support in developing self-regulated learning skills, some students may experience anxiety and discomfort. Likewise, parents may misunderstand or oppose the approach, particularly if they are unfamiliar with differentiated instruction.

Additionally, TaRL substantially increases the workload for teachers, who must not only teach but also conduct continuous diagnostic assessments and prepare customized materials. For teachers handling large classes, this additional responsibility can be overwhelming, especially in the absence of adequate institutional support.

From an administrative standpoint, the successful implementation of TaRL is also hindered by a lack of supportive policies at both school and governmental levels. Many institutions operate under rigid curricula and bureaucratic procedures that do not accommodate the flexibility required for differentiated instruction. Without clear policy alignment, the broader goals of educational equity and personalized learning remain difficult to achieve.

CONCLUSION

Based on the preceding discussion, the implementation of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach has shown positive contributions in enhancing student discipline through instruction tailored to individual levels of understanding. This method fosters a more structured and conducive learning environment, allowing students to develop stronger study habits and increased academic motivation. However, challenges such as suboptimal initial assessments and limited facilities continue to hinder the full realization of TaRL's potential. Improvements in diagnostic assessment systems, adequate resource allocation, and targeted teacher training are essential to ensure the method functions more effectively. With support from various stakeholders, TaRL holds significant potential not only to enhance students' academic comprehension but also to foster stronger discipline in the learning process.

The application of TaRL also plays a vital role in cultivating students' sense of responsibility by aligning instruction with their individual learning levels. This method not only supports academic understanding but also encourages students to become more active and accountable in completing tasks and engaging in collaborative activities. Despite its advantages, the implementation of TaRL still faces challenges such as limited motivation among certain students and the need for a more supportive learning environment. Therefore, the success of this approach heavily depends on continuous teacher training, regular evaluations of its effectiveness, and consistent involvement from parents and school administrators in instilling a sense of responsibility. Through these efforts, TaRL can serve as an effective strategy for developing students who are more independent and responsible, both academically and in everyday life.

Although TaRL offers numerous benefits, its implementation encounters a range of challenges that must be addressed to ensure its effectiveness. The primary obstacles include the lack of accurate diagnostic assessments, inadequate learning facilities, teacher preparedness, and resistance from students and parents toward the concept of ability-based grouping. Additionally, increased teacher workload and insufficient policy support present further barriers to successful execution. Strategic measures such as ongoing professional development, improved infrastructure, and effective communication with parents and school communities are necessary to overcome these issues. With collaborative support, the TaRL approach can be optimally implemented to enhance educational quality and foster more autonomous and responsible student character in the academic context.

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