

THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN TEACHERS IN PROVIDING THE NEEDS OF HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

Novia Hoki Anditya¹⁾, Meicky S. Panggabean²⁾, Kurnia P.S. Dirgantoro³⁾

¹⁾Sekolah Lentera Harapan Curug, Tangerang, Banten ^{2,3)}Universitas Pelita Harapan, Tangerang, Banten

Correspondence email: kurnia.dirgantoro@uph.edu

ABSTRACT

In every classroom, there are some students who perform better than their friends and are even very successful in most of their subjects. They are well-known as high-achieving students. They are grade conscious and sensitive to their teacher's qualities. However, data from PISA 2012 shows that teachers in Indonesia cannot meet the needs of high-achieving students. High-achieving students tend to put high expectations on their teachers. From a Christian perspective, what they do is one of accountability of the faith by studying wholeheartedly and Christian teachers need to guide these high-achieving students so they can reach their maximum potential in the way that is pleasing to God. The purpose of this literature review is to examine what high-achieving students need from their teachers. There are five needs of high-achieving students that need to be provided by their teachers; challenging assignments, self-acknowledgement, encouragement, opportunity to join in academic competitions, and learning community involvement. The responsibilities of teachers of high-achieving students do not stop only in showing the professionalism to meet their expectations, but also to help these students in the right way of studying that might be pleasing to God which is not being self-centered in achieving their goals.

Keywords: Christian teachers, high-achieving students, students' needs

ABSTRAK

Di setiap ruang kelas, terdapat siswa-siswa yang menunjukkan performa akademik yang lebih baik dari teman-temannya atau bahkan sangat berhasil dalam semua mata pelajaran. Mereka dikenal sebagai anak yang berprestasi tinggi. Mereka sangat peduli terhadap nilai dan sensitif terhadap kualitas guru. Namun, data dari PISA 2012 menunjukkan bahwa guru-guru di Indonesia tidak dapat memenuhi kebutuhan anak-anak yang berprestasi tinggi. Anak-anak yang berprestasi tinggi cenderung menaruh ekspektasi yang tinggi dari gurunya. Dari sudut pandang Kristiani, apa yang mereka lakukan adalah salah satu bentuk pertanggungjawaban iman untuk belajar dengan sepenuh hati dan guru Kristen perlu untuk membimbing anak berprestasi tinggi dalam mencapai potensi maksimal dari diri mereka di jalan yang berkenan di hadapan Tuhan. Tujuan dari kajian literatur ini adalah untuk menguji apa yang diperlukan oleh anak berprestasi tinggi dari guru mereka. Terdapat lima kebutuhan anak berprestasi tinggi yang perlu disediakan dari guru mereka; tugas yang menantang, pengakuan diri, dukungan, kesempatan untuk bergabung dan dukungan dalam kompetensi akademik, keterlibatan dari komunitas belajar. Tanggung jawab guru Kristen tidak hanya berhenti dalam menunjukkan profesionalitas untuk memenuhi ekspektasi mereka, tapi juga membawa mereka ke jalan yang benar dan berkenan bagi Tuhan dalam belajar yaitu dengan tidak menjadi berpusat hanya kepada diri sendiri dalam mencapai tujuan mereka.

Kata kunci: Guru Kristen, anak berprestasi tinggi, kebutuhan siswa

INTRODUCTION

At school, there are some students who are called high-achieving students. They are students who value their achievement very much. How people act, think, and talk will be

affected by the values that they hold. Monteiro, Almeida, & Vasconcelos (2012) also stated in their journal, "Student perceptions concerning learning and teaching processes deeply affect how they think, feel, and behave in the pursuit of their academic activities." (p.65). High-achieving students realize that the purpose of their coming to school is to study and to prove what they have already studied, so they are also encouraged to show good result. Balduf (2009) stated in his journal, "Many high-achieving students do not question their academic success. They do well and are content with the study skills they have developed to ensure that they achieve their goals." (p. 275).

High-achieving students perform better than their friends in most of the subjects. They enjoy their presences in the school and they also show good attitudes toward friends and the teachers. As the contrary, McCoach & Siegle (2001) stated that, "Underachievers exhibit more negative attitudes toward school than average and high achievers do." (p. 72). Based on what Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen (1996) stated in their journal, high-achieving students are special students and sensitive to teachers' qualities and they need more response from teachers, so teachers of high-achieving students should have up-to-date knowledge and the autonomy in order to construct their knowledge. In other words, high-achieving students need qualified teachers who can maximise their growth in the process of learning in the school. Buser, Stuck & Casey (1976) also stated in their journal that there are some characteristics of the teacher that are more important to high-achieving students than low-achieving students such as teacher mannerisms, strictness, tolerance, availability for out-of-class discussion, ability to react favorably to student criticism, and impartiality in the treatment of students.

Programme for International Student Assessment-PISA 2012 (OECD, 2013) shows the qualities of teachers in Indonesia can't meet the needs of high-achieving students. The data shows that 99% of students in schools in Indonesia have poor teacher-student relations, 94% of teachers have low expectations of students, 97% of teachers don't meet individual students' needs, 97% of teachers do absenteeism, 96% of teachers are too strict with students, 96% of teachers are late for classes, and 97% of teachers are not being well prepared for classes. The data above may show the qualities of teachers in Indonesia generally, not specifically the quality of the Christian teacher in Indonesia. But, this data can give a picture of how education in this country looks based on the teacher qualities. The data above shows qualities of teachers who cannot meet the needs of high-achieving students who are sensitive to teachers' qualities and they also tend to have high expectation of their teachers.

From a Christian perspective, being high-achieving students is one real accountability of the faith and one form of thankfulness for the talent that God has given to his people. High-achieving students always do their best to get the best result. These students work wholeheartedly to get the best achievement like what the Bible says in Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." High-achieving students like to study full heartedly and the reasons why they do that are varied. Thus, this is the role of Christian teachers to help high-achieving students to

keep developing their talents in academic field, to guide them in using their great potential, and moreover to help them grow in their faith including having the right motivation behind their effort to aim at a high goal as part of glorifying God. In this paper, the author tries to provide information about high-achieving students, what high-achieving students need from their teachers both inside and outside the classroom and how christian teachers can be good role models for them and guide them to reach their maximum potential and their goals.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Christian education is an education that has a purpose to redeem the life. Christian education is about redeeming all aspects of human life including behavior of students, their ways of thinking and the motivations and purposes of all things that students do. Van Brummelen (2009) stated in his book that the redemption through Christian education has a final purpose which is to make students responsive and responsible disciples of Christ. Christian education must be centered on Christ and the Bible as the resource of the truth of all things. The truth of the love of Christ must be known by students through all the learning processes in the school and that truth must come from. Pazmiño (2008) in his book stated "Scripture is the essential source for understanding distinctively Christian elements in education." (p. 19). So, through the learning process that happen in the classroom, students should be able to see the truth that comes from God and they should be able to see God himself.

In Christian education, students get educated not only in their intellectual matter with the knowledge that is given in the classroom, but also in all aspects such as their spiritual, social and personal skills with all the values that the Bible teach, especially about the main teaching of the Bible which is love. Students need to learn the love of Christ, not only from what they learn in the class of Christian Religion but also from their environment and daily interaction with teachers and friends. Christian education does not stop only at bringing students to know Christ and put their faith in Him, but also in discipling the students to be more like Christ through the sanctification that happens everyday. In education, teachers have the front line role as the people who interact daily with students. Students will see their teachers and they will learn a lot from their teachers. The works in Christian education cannot be separated from the work of Chrstian teachers in the school. It is supported by what Pazmiño stated in his book, "To think responsibly about and practice education from a distinctly evangel-ical theological position, Christians, and in particular Christian educators, must carefully examine the biblical foundations for Christian education." (p. 19).

CHRISTIAN TEACHER

Many Christians can be teachers but not all of them will be truly Christian teachers. Christian teacher is not only a teacher who has been born again and put the faith in Jesus Christ. Moreover, Van Brummelen (2009) in his book said that the duty of the Christian

teacher is to educate the student to have a life of a responsive disciple in Jesus Christ (p.4). Based on Oxford Dictionaries, the word of responsive means reacting quickly and in a positive way and reacting with interest and enthusiasm. Willard (2006) in his book stated that the disciple is one stage above the convert and one level below the worker of God's kingdom (p.4). The disciple doesn't stop in the stage of acknowledging their Lord and converting to faith in Him. He also explained later that in the heart of a disciple of Jesus Christ there is one desire which is to be like Him (p. 6). It can be concluded that responsive disciples of Jesus Christ means disciples who react positively with enthusiasm to be like Jesus Christ after converting to the faith in Him. In the classroom, students who have a life of a responsive disciple in Jesus Christ will show progressive growth in some aspects in their lives especially in spiritual, social and intellectual aspects through the learning process that they do everyday with the teachers. Thus, the role of a Christian teacher does not only bring the students to have faith in Christ, but also leads their students in progress of daily sanctification to be more like Him and to live out their faith with enthusiasm in those aspects.

Christian teachers in the school play a big role for they have a direct interaction with students. Porter (2000) in her book stated that individuals may begin a new behavior by imitating others (p.36). At the school students will see their teacher as their role model. Christian teachers are supposed to be good role models to them, both as teachers and mature Christians, to help them growing more deeply in their strength of intellect and also in their faith. As a teacher, Christian teacher should have good competences that are needed by the teacher in classroom (pedagogy, social, personality, and professionalism competence) and as a mature Christian, teachers need to show the real characteristics of a Christian. Moarko (2014) stated in his book that there are seven characteristics of mature Christians and they are Christ centered, Bible based, dependent on the Holy Spirit, faithful in prayer, faithful living oriented, loving and graceful, and the last persevering.

HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

Based on Gagne (2004), high-achievers are those who systematically develop abilities, skills and knowledge in at least one field of human activities to a condition they will be among top 10 per age peers who are also active in that field. High-achieving students care about teaching and learning context in the school and therefore they are sensitive to the teacher qualities. Based on Heacox (1991) there are eight characteristics of high-achieving students, they are goal oriented, positive thinkers, confident, resilient, self-disciplined, holding their proud, proficient, and risk takers.

Those characteristics are not far different from what Gawronski & Mathis (1965) stated in their journal, high-achieving students seem to have better self-regulation because they find greater satisfaction in following planned procedures. High-achieving students are also grade conscious.

High-achieving students have good study habits that helps them achieve their goal which is oriented in getting good grades. It is supported by what McCoach & Siegle (2001)

stated in their journal, "When students value the goals associated with school, they are more likely to be achievers." (p. 73). They are also pretty confident in reaching the goals that they have set or planned. They execute their plans to reach their goal by having a very great self-regulation in studying. It is supported by what Macaro & Wingate (2004) stated in their journal, "The students' ability to determine their own success was achieved by an abandonment of previous linguistic goals in favour of survival tactics." (p. 485). All those plans and how they execute them make high-achieving students bold in facing all the difficulties that they may face in the process of learning, which is why they look fully like as risk takers.

However, how teachers teach them also gives a big impact for high-achieving students in achieving their goals. Monteiro, Almeida, & Vasconcelos (2012) stated in their journal there are three values that high-achieving students value from their teachers and those values are the quality of the affective relationship that teachers establish with their students, the ability to transmit knowledge and stimulate students to learn and a demanding context which encourages and keeps them motivated. High-achieving students demand their teachers to be able to relate to them and to have good relationships with the students. They also want teachers who are not only good in content, but are also able to bridge the gap in transferring the knowledge to them and in stimulating their curiosity to learn.

Based on several journals about high-achieving students (Monteiro, Almeida, & Vasconcelos, 2012; Jabeen & Ahmad, 2013; Buser, Stuck & Casey, 1976), it can be synthesised that the following are the needs of the high-achieving students that have to be provided by teachers; 1) challenging assignments, 2) self-acknowledgements, 3) encouragements, 4) opportunity to join and supports in academic competition, 5) learning community involvement.

High-achieving students look more shining among their friends, but there are some characteristics of high-achieving students which are generally considered negative by those who are not high-achievers; high-achieving students are easily more self-centered and they are grade-oriented.

High-achieving students value the achievements very much, so to reach their goals, high-achieving students will be easily more self-centered than average students. Händel, Vialle, & Ziegler (2013) stated in their journal, "Consequently, individuals who exhibit high performance are not always well-liked and high performance in a certain domain might lead to lower acceptance within a group." (p. 7). These students only focus on what they need to achieve the final result. This can impact how high-achieving students relate with their friends or their social skills. The role of Christian teachers is needed to monitor high-achieving students to keep relating with their friends in the process of studying in the classroom by giving group assessment or using a method of peer tutoring to stimulate their social skill.

For students who are not high-achiever, they will look at high-achieving students as those who are very grade-oriented. But, refer back to Gardner's theory of multiple

intelligences, each and every student has their unique way in learning and it highly affects on what field they focus on. Some students are artistic, while others are musical. Thus, Christian teachers need to remind students that everyone learns and focuses on diversified goals, so both high-achieving and non-high-achieving students can respect each other as a community of the classroom and even support each other.

PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH

This article is literature review to examine what high-achieving students need from their teachers.

CHALLENGING ASSIGNMENT

High-achieving students generally have high self-confidence. They know their abilities and are pretty confident of their abilities to face all the hardship in the process of learning. Jabeen & Ahmad (2013) stated that high-achieving students tend to take intermediate risk and plan in advance. Giving challenging assignments to high-achieving students is one way to convince themselves and helping them to keep developing their talents. High-achieving students like challenges because they are risk takers, they like to learn and try new things as part of developing themselves.

To be able to give challenging assignments to high-achieving students, Christian teachers need to master the content that is taught to students. Mastering the content means having the understanding of the topic as well as being able to deliver the content to students. A challenging assignment is not only containing problems of the depth of knowledge, but it should also provide activities for students that can stimulate and support them growing in some aspects like intellectual and social skills through the assignment. Kuhn (2007) stated that school experience can be easy for students to make meaning of it when they are engaged in highly educational activities whose purpose and value become apparent in the process of engaging them. Challenging assignments also should stimulate students to be in higher level thinking skill. Williams & Williams stated in their journal that "When the teacher is more enthusiastic about a topic, then the students will be more inclined to believe that the topic has value for them." (p. 9). It is important however to remember that high-achieving students are not always gifted students. As the contrary, Karaduman (2013) said in her journal, "Some underachievers are gifted, with superior intellectual ability and special talents." (p. 165). Teachers should never put unrealistic expectations that cannot be reached by high-achieving students in giving challenging assignment. Furthermore, this type of expectation can demotivate students.

High-achieving students might get over self-confidence for finishing challenging assignments very well. The role of Christian teachers is needed not only to give beautiful words of appreciation to them for their achievements, but also to keep them away from being prideful by earning those achievements. Bridges (2008) stated that everyone who believes that she/he is superior in some aspects has the possibility to be permanently thinking she/he is good at everything. Christian teachers must help students realize that

everything they can achieve is only because of God's providence in their lives. Reminding students about contributions both from other people and God is needed to do by teachers so that they might not fall into the sin of being prideful.

SELF-ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

High-achieving students are able to see that education is not only about gaining knowledge and grades in the classroom, but it is also about their presence as a part of the classroom community. High-achieving students are sensitive to teacher's qualities including how teachers treat the students as one community in the classroom. High-achieving students need to be treated fairly and with respect by their teachers even when there is a disagreement between them and the teachers. Teachers can give fair treatments to students through several ways, for example using a rubric for the evaluation. High-achieving students need one positive self-perception from their teachers about themselves especially when they are able to do well in learning process.

High-achieving students need their self-acknowledgement as a way to gain more motivation and to prove their abilities to others. Renzulli, Gubbins, Siegle, Zhang, & Chen (2005) stated in their journal that it is important to respect high-achieving students' interests and vocational projects because the academic involvement of talented students is a result of their intrinsic motivation for learning. High-achieving students tend not to believe in unreal strength for they are more logical realistic people. Getting self-acknowledgement from people do not only motivate them but also it is a real appreciation for what they have already achieved.

It is important that self-acknowledgement be given to high-achieving students by the teachers, but Christian teachers also have to remind high-achieving students that their identities do not come from people's acknowledgement. The way God accepts his people is not like how people accept others generally. It is written in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." God accepts his people not because of all the achievements that they can reach or the ability that they have, but He accepts them in his sovereignty by grace alone.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Williams & Williams stated in their journal "Student motivation is an essential element that is necessary for quality education." (p. 2). Giving encouragements to high-achieving students is one way to keep their self-confidence and to keep them doing their best. Generally, it is important encouragement be given in the classroom for it will help students to keep motivated to learn. For high-achieving students, high encouragement can be a trigger to keep developing their potential and effort in achieving their goals.

In the Bible, Paul was one of the apostles who always encouraged people to keep holding their faith and follow the way of truth. As the leader in Christianity at that time, Paul gave encouragement to others, so that the believer of Jesus Christ at that time will keep

their faith in Christ no matter what happened and no matter what the price that they may have to pay. In the classroom, Christian teachers give encouragement to high-achieving students so they will keep doing their best and achieving their goals.

Even though high-achieving students are confident with their abilities, they still need encouragement from some people whom they think are superior to themselves such as their teachers. In giving encouragement to students, Christian teachers should emphasize and remind them about valuing the whole process of learning rather than only valuing the final result. Wrong encouragement for high-achieving students can make them achieve their goals by justifying any way.

OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN AND SUPPORTS IN ACADEMIC COMPETITION

Kuech and Sanford (2014) stated in their journal, "Competence, engagement and motivation are factors that have been reported to strongly promote academic achievement, personal growth and career choices in those areas." (p. 393). Opportunity to join academic competition is a precious experience for high-achieving students because with that chance they are trusted for their ability in the academic field. Another reason is because they have high self-confidence and they are risk takers, so joining academic competition will challenge them to achieve new things that are greater than good grades in the classroom and they will be trained to have a good competitive mental. Joining academic competition also can motivate high-achieving students to learn more and reach their maximum potential.

From Christian perspective, joining academic competition is one way of being responsible for the talents that God has given to these high-achieving students. As written in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 24, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize." Life is a race that is worth fighting for. Paul explained later in 1 Corinthians 26, "Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air." In fighting in the life race, Paul wants to remind us that everyone has to be responsible in this life race by not fighting roughly. The point from the passage above is how to be responsible in getting the highest prize in a race but still in the way that is pleasing to God. Human life is a long race and it is important to run for the race in the field that people have been given talents in. However, through the passage above also, Paul said that all the crowns in this world are not everlasting crown. High-achieving students need to be reminded that they need to focus not only on the crowns in this world, but also the only everlasting living crown from God in the end of human life.

Christian teachers are responsible to guide high-achieving students before, during and after the competition of academic. Christian teachers need to support high-achieving students before the competition by preparing them and by providing more practice and after-class time. During the competition, encouragement and reminders to compete sportingly are needed to be given to these students, so they will keep remembering to compete in the right way. After the competition, Christian teachers need to remind these

students, no matter what they have already achieved or not, the precious thing is not only the final result but the whole process of the competition from beginning to the end. If high-achieving students have succeed in achieving something through the competition, Christian teachers should remind them that they are able to reach those achievements because God takes part in and through them, so any achievement that they reach is not only because of their hardwork.

Competition is good for high-achieving students because they have some characteristics that are compatible with the nature of competition. However, school should include all students to join all kind of competitions. The competitions that school should be involved in should not be limited only in the academic field such as mathematics and science, but they can be other competitions such as sports competition, art competition, or even music competition. The competitions are not only for high-achieving students and all students have the same chance to take part in the competition that they are good at. Through this way, other students will learn how to support their friends in their own master field and they will learn how to appreciate the variety of God's creatures in this world.

LEARNING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Learning community involvement is about the relationship among all people in the learning community, especially the relationship between teachers and students. Monteiro, Almeida, & Vasconcelos (2012) stated in their research of high-achieving students, "The relationship between teachers and students seems to have had an important impact on the development of the students." (p. 69). High-achieving students need supports from teachers as the people who are superior to themselves. They can receive those supports if there are good relationships between students and teachers. On contrary, Duffy (2003) stated in his journal that under-achieving students differ from high-achieving students because under-achieving students avoid working with mentors or teachers. Monteiro, Almeida, & Vasconcelos (2012) also added in their journal that high-achieving students need affection and emotional relation with their teachers such as patience, availability and openness of the teachers. This kind of relation will help high-achieving students in the process of learning and it will keep high-achieving students motivated to learn in the classroom.

High-achieving students need this supportive learning environment as part of their learning how to build a good interaction and trust with people. It will prepare them in the next stage of education in working and learning with the professor for example, as a person who is superior and can be their mentor in their research. By having a good relationship between teachers and high-achieving students, teachers also will be more able to monitor and recognize the development of high-achieving students. When high-achieving students find some difficulties in the process of learning, they will be more open to their teachers about their hardship and it will help them to keep developing in their ability.

In Christianity, relationship is an important thing that needs to be had by Christians. People can have everything and be rich, but without having good relationship with anyone, the life will be meaningless. High-achieving students, as had been stated above, show good

attitudes towards school, however it does not guarantee that they are good with social skills, especially in developing relationships with people around them. Good attitude is only about obeying rules and never getting into any trouble. The role of Christian teachers is needed not only by being high-achieving students' teachers, but also by being mentors of their life. Being high-achieving students mentors is also an opportunity for Christian teachers to disciple them. In the process of this discipling, high-achieving students will learn how to relate with people around them as a Christian community of the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Bala (2014) stated in his journal that high-achieving students have dominant interest in knowledge, learning and they believe more in kindness, charity, and love. (p. 116). Christian teacher has to be responsible for teaching high-achieving students in a positive way what they need and meeting high-achieving students' needs for the thirst for knowledge. High-achieving students tend to put high expectations on their teachers, not only in mastering the content but also in delivering the content in the understandable ways, giving challenging evaluations and evaluating their assignment objectively. McCoach & Siegle (2001) stated in their journal, "Students who have positive views of their teachers are more likely to demonstrate achievement-oriented behaviors." (p. 72). Gaining a trust from high-achieving students through professionalism as a teacher is important to help high-achieving students grow as an individual through education.

The responsibilities of teachers of high-achieving students do not stop only at showing the professionalism to meet their expectations. Christian teachers are also responsible for showing these students the right way of studying that might be pleasing God which is not being self-centered in achieving their goals.

Jabeen & Ahmad (2013) stated in their journal, "High-achievers are in favour of 'internal control of fate' and possess strong determination and deny the role of some superior unknown force in shaping their destiny." (p. 227). High-achieving students tend to think that they have all control over their fate. Being responsible for doing the best in the learning process is good, but the role of the teacher is also to keep them from being prideful and self-centered because these high-achieving students who have high self-confidence are more easily to fall into those sins.

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