

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background

Learning is an enduring change in behavior, or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or other forms of experience. Learning involves acquiring and modifying knowledge, skills, strategies, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. People learn cognitive, linguistic, motor, and social skills, and these can take many forms (Schunk, 2012). Today's educational policy is heading towards a more active role of students in the whole educational system (Ball, 2008). According to Whitty & Wisby (2007) schools would benefit by giving a greater emphasis to students' voice. That means giving them a more active role in their education and schooling along with teachers becoming more attentive to what students say about their learning experiences during their school life (Hargreaves, 2004).

During learning activities, in fact there is a condition where the students that taught by the same teacher with the same subject matter and learning methods but achieved a different outcomes. Based on the condition above that teachers need to know much more about students learning and the factors that can enhance or impede it. Understanding how student learn is of fundamental importance for teaching and for effective curriculum planning. An understanding of theories and principles of learning can help teachers select the most appropriate methods of instruction to suit different types of subject matter, different types of learning, different educational outcomes, and different characteristics of learners (Gagne & Wager, 2002). Penso (2002) stated that knowledge of learning processes can also help teachers anticipate the difficulties some students may encounter in certain school subjects. Teachers can then consider how best to prevent or minimise learning problems and how to motivate their students to learn (Brophy, 2001; Sasson, 2001).

In most countries the term learning difficulty is applied to students who are not making adequate progress within the school curriculum, particularly in basic skill areas covering language, literacy and numeracy. Their problems may be associated with just one particular school subject, or may be evident across all subjects in the academic curriculum. For a variety of reasons these students do not find learning easy in school (Westwood & Graham, 2000). Instead they experience frustration and failure and develop increasingly negative feelings toward learning in school (Slavin, 1994). To prevent this problem, all effective early intervention programs tend to place due emphasis on explicit teaching (Chan & Dally, 2000).

Instead, the learning difficulties may be due to external factors such as socio-cultural disadvantage, limited opportunities to learn, a lack of support from home, an inappropriate curriculum, or insufficient teaching in the early years. The learning problems these students experience are often further exacerbated by their emotional reactions to lack of success. Badian (1996) even refers to them as having 'garden variety' learning problems, meaning that such difficulties are widespread and in no way unusual. We normally refer to these students now as having general learning difficulties.

Science is boring for many students difficult, not relevant to the people's lives, more attractive to boys and less interesting to older students (Ebenezer & Zooler, 1993). While according to Ramsden (1998), these conclusions cannot, however, be generalised to all the sciences. There are differences in attitudes toward physical and biological sciences. Physical sciences are receive more negative views than biological sciences. Biology is generally conceived by most students as the easiest science subject and so, enjoys larger number of enrolment than other basic science subjects (Ajewole, 2006). Several researchers have pointed out different reasons for students poor performance, some of which are due to the abstractness of certain aspects of biology, lack of understanding on the students' part, certain biological concepts and terminologies, etc (Okeke & Ochuba, 1986). However, the yearly percentage pass in the subject is very low compared with students'

performance in other basic sciences as well as other subjects. This, it should be stated, does not translate to it's being easy (Nzelum, 2010).

It obtained through the work of the Researcher as a biology teacher and a biology examiner for the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) at the Senior High School (SHS) level, suggests that most students perform poorly in biology because they have a difficulty with learning some biology concepts. This may be because biology is taught abstractly, making some of the concepts seem complex and confusing and therefore difficult for students. Some research studies based on the difficulties of topic in biology is classification. According to survey data done by Godfred Danso (2016) relating to topics in biology students find difficult to learn classification topics and obtained 30.7 percent from 92 respondents. Moreover, Tekkaya (2001) obtained data that approximately 14.4 percent the students have learning difficulty in classification subject matter. In short, students have still some problems in science subject matter and specifically the topic of classification. Students may find that some biological concepts such as genetics, photosynthesis, and food web are abstract, difficult, confusing, and complicated. They are obstacles for students realizing biological concepts. Therefore, students may not construct meaningful learning in biology.

According to the results of interviews with biology teacher especially at grade VII in SMP AL WASHLIYAH AMPERA II Medan Academic Year of 2017/2018 obtained data as a prove that there was a learning difficulties faced by students at grade-VII class, such as: (1) learning interest of students at lower levels, indicated by the percentage of the median value for the achievement of the minimum completeness criteria (KKM) averaged 40% of students who do not achieve the minimum completeness criteria (KKM); (2) a lot of terminology that used in biology subjects especially in topic of classification shown by students who did not answer when asked by the teacher; (3) a similar thing happened when the teacher gives the opportunity to the students to ask questions and no one wants to ask; (4) students doing other activities like playing mobile phones, talking with their friends, even sleeping in class while the teacher explained the lesson to

students. Based on the fact that occur during observation of students grade VII in SMP AL WASHLIYAH AMPERA II Medan, it needs to be analyze that there is a learning diifficulties occured in grade VII in SMP AL WASHLIYAH AMPERA II Medan and should be solved immidiately because it will affect to the interest and understanding of students especially in biology subject matter. Considering to the background of the research above, it is necessary to conduct a research title **“Analysis Of Students’ Learning Difficulties On Classification Subject Matter In Grade VII Of SMP Al Washliyah Ampera II Academic Year 2017/2018”**

### **1.2. Problem Identification**

According to the background of the issues above, researcher identified the research problem as follows:

1. Learning process that still give priority to the use of conventional methods and also question-answer
2. The motivation of the student in following the process of learning that tend to be less proved by the absence of a variation of methods used by teachers in the classroom
3. Academic achievement of students who are still classified as low as evidenced by 40% average of students who do not achieve the minimum completeness criteria.

### **1.3. Problem Limitation**

The limitation of problems in this reasearch as follows:

1. Students learning difficulties category from cognitive aspect focus on classification topic in grade VII in SMP AL WASHLIYAH AMPERA II Medan
2. Students learning difficulties category from each learning indicators on classification topic in grade VII in SMP AL WASHLIYAH AMPERA II Medan

3. Several factors that influence the students' learning difficulties on classification topic in grade VII in SMP AL WASHLIYAH AMPERA II Medan

#### **1.4. Research Question**

The research question on this reasearch as follows:

1. Which cognitive aspects that occur students learning difficulties on classification topic?
2. Which indicator aspects that occur students learning difficulties on classification topic?
3. What are the the factors that affect to students learning difficulties on classification topic?

#### **1.5. Research Objective**

This research is conducted to achieve some objectives as follows:

1. To determine category of students learning difficulties from cognitive aspect on classification topic in grade VII in SMP AL WASHLIYAH AMPERA II Medan Academic Year 2017/2018.
2. To know indicator aspect that difficult to students in grade VII in SMP AL WASHLIYAH AMPERA II Medan Academic Year 2017/2018 in learning of classification topic.
3. To determine students' learning difficulties factors on learning classification topic in grade VII in SMP AL WASHLIYAH AMPERA II Medan Academic Year 2017/2018.

#### **1.6. Research Significant**

This research is expected to have significant benefits for many people, especially for teachers and people who will investigate further research about topic related to learning difficulties of students. The benefits provided both in theoretical and practical.

In theoretical, this research is expected to have significant benefits such as: (1) as additional information for teachers about the learning difficulties faced by the students, especially in the topic of the classification, (2) as a reference for the teacher to follow up the learning difficulties that occur in students so that the students get the opportunity to experience learning process that easy to understand, (3) as a reference for researchers to develop a research regarding learning difficulties in students.

While in practical, this study has several benefits as follows, (1) to contribute information especially teachers or those who will carry out further research into the difficulties of learning in students, (2) as input information for principals to make further improvement to biology teacher performance in learning process, (3) as a reference for teachers to develop creativity in teaching so that learning difficulties in students can be overcome.