

## THE IMPROVEMENT OF CULTURAL CAPITAL AS THE INDICATOR OF THE SUCCESS OF EDUCATION

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### Abstract

An old Latin saying says *non scholae sed vitae discimus* which means we do not study for the sake of academic matters but for life. Therefore the ultimate aim of education is that someone can live well, or can be a good citizen who is ready to bring about the reform of the social order as the Reconstructionists say. People sometimes use objective orientated curriculum as the implication of the reconstructionism. However, in practice the objective here is simply interpreted as passing final passing grades, especially of the national exam. Therefore, the teaching learning practices always refer to final exam orientation activities. Consequently, competence achievement is not the priority in education and education cannot change someone's behavior as proposed by reconstructionism. This paper is aimed to review the use of national exams to measure the success of education instead of measuring the improvement of students' cultural capital. Some research on cultural capital which findings say that it influences the success of study will be the basis of the discussion. As we know, those who have better cultural capital will achieve educational capital better. Those who have good cultural capital has good *habitus* where the act or behavior comes from. Improving one's cultural capital will improve one's *habitus* which will lead towards the improvement of students' success of education.

**Keywords:** cultural capital, national exam, *habitus*, reconstructionism

### Introduction

An old Latin saying says *non scholae sed vitae discimus* which means we do not study for the sake of academic matters but for life. Therefore the ultimate aim of education is that someone can live well, or can be a good citizen who is ready to bring about the reform of the social order. Ornstein, *et al.* (2011) give an example how Indian people the past taught their youngsters how to use spears, arrows and knives, where the youngsters did not only inherit the competencies but also the culture for the sake of their life. The youngsters did not think about marks nor the academic cumulative index. The most important for them were survival and contributions for their community.

Nowadays, education is not as simple as what Indian people in the past had. Knowledge, competencies and the cultures are getting more complex. The aim of education has been changing and the curriculum has been either. Finney, (2006, 68-88) provides her analysis of the changes of education philosophy and its curriculum from the content model or classical humanism to the new pragmatism or mixed-focus curriculum. The aim of education is transferring cultural heritage only but achieving the target which is of social changes with humanistic process.

As a system, education needs to focus on its input, process and its output. The new pragmatism which focus on both objectives and process also needs good way of measuring the output. The problem is in the current practice the objective here is simply interpreted as passing final passing grades, especially of the national exam. Therefore, the teaching learning practices always refer to final exam orientation activities. Consequently, cultural, values and competence achievement are not the priority in

education and education cannot change someone's behavior as proposed by reconstructionism and the process tends to not be humanistic. Such situation makes people question on the benefits of the National Exam, moreover when they know that Finland which does not conduct a national exams for elementary school students and junior high school students have very good educational index (OECD).

Here are some examples which could be the effects of sing the national exam to measure the success of educational achievement. Ryan, a master graduate from a very reputable university with index cumulative more than 3,3, asked the supreme court to legalize committing suicide. He was frustrated of being no jobs though he was successful in study (The *Kompas*, Monday, 14 August 2014). The Indonesia Corruption Watch also reported the unfairness in the process of the national exam. Students could buy the exam answer keys (The *Kompas*, 27 May 2013). The general secretary of Indonesian Teacher Association Federation, Retno Listyarti reported that some Heads of the Local Education Offices urged teachers to success the UN with any efforts, meaning teachers have to do anything to pass students examination (The *Kompas*, 20 April 2012). No wonder the number of the juvenile delinquency in Indonesia is improving.

This paper is discussing problems of the national exam as the main tool to measure the educational success. It also proposes measuring the improvement of cultural capital of the students to measure the success of study.

The Changes of Philosophy of Education and the Implications

Some educational experts such Gutek (1974), Ornstein et al.(2006), Tilaar (2012), summarize the

improvement of the educational philosophy which really influence the educational practices. Each philosophy influences its metaphysics, epistemology, axiology and the educational implications. For instance, the idealism implies that reality is spiritual or mental and unchanging, knowing means the recall of latent ideas and values are universal, absolute and eternal. The implication for education is that a subject matter curriculum emphasizes the culture's great and enduring ideas. While Postmodernism implies that schools are sites of democratic criticism and social change to empower dominated groups because it rejects metaphysics as historical constructions. People have to deconstruct texts to find their origin and use by dominant groups and classes. Schools are sites of democratic criticism and social change to empower dominated groups (Ornstein *et al.*, 2012, p. 169).

Denise Finney (2002) in her paper explains the development of educational philosophy and its implications to educational systems. She divides it into four, namely the content model or classical humanism, the objectives model or reconstructionism, the process model or progressivism, and the pragmatism or a mixed focus curriculum. Each development came one after another because the new one is always intended to overcome the weaknesses of previous one. Therefore each development implies different understanding of what to be learned and how to learn things to learn.

#### The content model or classical humanism

The focus is the content or things to learn by students. The content is valued cultural heritage which contributes to the overall intellectual development of the learners. Teacher will be the resourceful person as the center of knowledge who has to share their knowledge, skills and all cultural heritage. This has become the dominant philosophy in education especially in the history of western education. However, it has its weaknesses considering the complexity of the learning process, it cannot justify the transmission of one particular culture so people with different culture might have different educational achievement and it does not give enough space for any new knowledge. The weakness of this educational philosophy is of the failure to update with new theories and technologies which keep improving. Memorizing concepts and theories is dominant in the process of teaching learning.

#### The objectives model or reconstructionism

The curriculum planning is no longer the content but the objectives of the teaching learning programs. It is based on the behavioral psychology theories which says that education should be able to bring about some kind of social change. The process of learning is observable and measurable. Therefore, in the process of learning the objective should be clear or must be unambiguously describe the behavior to be performed. The condition under which performance will be expected to occur should be well

described. There must be standard or criterion of acceptance performance. Standardized test or national exam is applicable with this philosophy. With this reconstructionism philosophy education has clear goals, the evaluation is ease and accountable. However this kind of education reduces the concept of autonomy, self-fulfilment and personal development. Usually, a teacher gives a certain material with a certain method and students who have their individual differences, different learning styles and cultural capital. Students are considered as the objects of education, not the subjects. In Indonesia, the national curriculum and its national exam are the product of the educational philosophy. With various situations such as various facilities, teacher's competence, economical background and student's ability all students have to have the same final test.

#### The process model or Progressivism

As the answer of the weaknesses of the previous philosophical education which was not really humanistic this educational philosophy focuses on individual progress towards self-fulfilment. The goals of education are not defined in terms of particular ends or products, but in terms of processes by which individual develops understanding and awareness and creates possibility for future learning. This educational philosophy is aware of individual differences and therefore it is humanistic. However, it is not attractive enough as a national curriculum especially when education is intended to produce massive workers ready for industries. In Indonesia this educational philosophy inspires the existence of inclusive schools.

#### The new pragmatism or mixed focus curriculum

The new pragmatism is a combination between objective oriented and the process model. Curriculum sets the goals to achieve but in the process of achieving them humanistic education is done. School-based curriculum was the implication of this educational philosophy where minimum requirements are nationally set up but in practice each school can design their own curriculum based on the local needs and local capabilities.

These four different educational philosophies and curricula proposed by Finney show different constructions of education. In the real practice of education in Indonesia, however, there is no clear cut of these four especially of its input and how to measure the educational achievement. In fact, national exam has been used to measure how successful someone in education. Therefore, problems as mentioned in the previous part such as unfairness in the process of doing the exam, the raising of the number of jobless educated people and juvenile delinquency still exist. We need alternatives to measure the success of education in any educational philosophy.

### What UN measures?

Based on Finney's classification, the current Indonesia curriculum, the 2013 curriculum, is a mixed focus curriculum. In one hand, it is considered standard based curriculum. Every students should be able to achieve the minimum national standard (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2013). It is also said as an outcome based education because the whole processes are intended at achieving standardized outcomes. In the other hand, however, the use of the scientific approach which belongs to progressivism proposed by John Dewey makes it quite complicated in the concept since progressivism tends to focus on the individual process. Students are as the center or as subjects not objects. It also emphasizes cooperative group activities to enhance social intelligence (Orstein *et al.*, 2006, p.112). Therefore this curriculum is categorized as the new pragmatism or mixed focus curriculum.

In the book entitled *Materi Pelatihan Guru Kurikulum 2013*, it is mentioned that the curriculum is designed to overcome problems listed in introduction, such as unfairness in UN and juvenile delinquencies. Therefore all subjects should contribute to the formation of knowledge, attitudes, and competence. In the way, the curriculum doesn't merely focus on knowledge, it also deals with attitudes and competence which belong to habitus proposed by Bourdieu.

Instead of positive aspects of UN as mentioned in the research conducted by Prof. Djemari Mardapi and Prof. Badrun such as motivating students and teachers to do the better in mastering the material (2009), UN is also considered as not fair, not objective and not accountable (Hasan, 2010). Using UN to measure the success of study is not fair because there many things which are totally different in the process of studying such as student's individual differences, facilities, teacher's quality and so on. UN which can only measure student's knowledge is considered not objective since the input and process of curriculum also includes attitudes and competence. UN cannot measure student's success by measuring the knowledge only. UN is also considered unaccountable, the result of UN cannot show the real quality of a student, especially when we considered multiple intelligence theory.

With above consideration it seems that a test would not be enough to measure the success of study. There should be authentic assessments on the aspects of attitudes, knowledge, skills on the portfolio based assessment. Therefore, portfolio assessment is suggested. Beside, teachers should act as researchers (Finney, 2002), meaning they have to observe student's individual progress from different aspects of learning to formulate their progress. So, a test can only measure one aspect of the objectives of study among some. Education needs holistic method of assessing student's success.

### Cultural Capital to Measure the Success of Study

Until 1960's people could not understand why rich students were more successful than the poor ones. Bourdieu's proposition that those who have high cultural capital have better chance to get better educational attainment (1960) has giving an insight that beside psychology and pedagogy education also needs sociology. Only considering learning theories and pedagogy is not enough to help all students with different social classes achieve good educational attainment.

According to Bourdieu, the family background contributes a lot to the success of one's study. Someone inherits cultural capital from his/her family. DiMaggio(1983), Lareau (1987), Sullivan (2001) conducted a research on the family background, and they found out that educated parents or parents with high financial capital provide better cultural capital to their children. However, De Graaf & De Graaf (2002) in their research concluded that education influences one's cultural capital than family does. This conclusion is supported by Giroux (2006) who says that agency factor is dominant to inherit cultural capital. So, education is believed to be very important factor in inheriting cultural capital. Therefore, education system, including English education needs to address cultural capital and to consider sociology as an important thing to improve the system.

Cultural capital was firstly proposed by Bourdieu in 1960. It is called capital because it is convertible into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications yet it cannot be transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights, or even titles of nobility) by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange. Cultural capital is also work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost, an investment especially through education. People inherit cultural capital from the family and Paul Dimaggio found out that parents' jobs and education play important role to the success of their children education (1982). However, De Graaf lately says that parents' educational background influence one's educational attainment more than parents' economic background (2002).

To transfer cultural capital at school one needs academic ability which is in the forms of linguistic fluency, broad cultural knowledge, and knowledge of the 'rules of the game' of academic assessments. These academic abilities can be distinguished from other styles and behaviors which may be rewarded within the education system, such as interacting with teachers in an approved way (Sullivan, 2007).

Firstly, Bourdieu formulated cultural capital as informal academic standard that also are class attributes of the dominant class, consisting of such factors as informal knowledge about education, linguistic competence, and specific attitudes or personal style (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964). In 1970 Bourdieu and Passeron redefined the cultural capital into academic standards and class attributes to

include linguistic aptitude, previous academic culture, formal knowledge of general cultural, and diplomas (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). In the second definition Bourdieu changed his perspective from informal academic standard into the formal one and he also considered class attributes in the same level as academic standard. The third definition of cultural capital is instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed (Bourdieu, 1977:190). In 1979 Bourdieu and Passeron proposed another definition of cultural capital as an indicator and a basis of class position, including cultural attitudes, preferences, and behavior that are conceptualized as tastes used for social selection (Bourdieu, 1979). Cultural capital was not considered as formal academic standard any longer but as an indicator of class position it was not class attribute but the basis of class position. So, cultural capital is an indicator and a basis of class position which can classify social status of a family. The indicator can be in the form of different taste, language and *habitus*.

*Habitus* refers to lifestyle, the values, the dispositions and expectation of particular social groups that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. Perhaps in more basic terms, the *habitus* could be understood as a structure of the mind characterized by a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions and taste. The way a teacher teaches depends on what she or he believes how she/he puts values on it. What she/he does in the class is the result of her/his *habitus*. *Habitus* is not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period' (Navarro 2006: 16).

Taste is an individual's personal and cultural patterns of choice and preference. Taste is about drawing distinctions between things such as styles, manners, consumer goods and works of art and relating to these. Social inquiry of taste is about the human ability to judge what is beautiful, good and proper. Taste is the ability to make discriminating judgments about aesthetic and artistic matters. Seeing one's writings people can see her/his taste, especially his/her style in writing, its concern and the diction. When someone has good taste she/he can express in an appropriate expression based on the context.

Language is also important to be considered in understanding cultural capital especially when language is used to classify social classes in the society. High social class people have different ways in expressing ideas compared to people from low social class. DiMaggio explained that teachers understand questions from students with high cultural capital than those which come from students with low cultural capital.

There are three different forms of cultural capital. The first is embodied state, widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials). It is in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body. It cannot be accumulated beyond the appropriating capacities of

an individual agent; it declines and dies with the bearer (with his biological capacity, his memory, etc.). The second form is objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematic, etc. The third one is the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.

Measuring student's cultural capital to measure the success of their study means researching personal development of attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials which belongs to the internalized cultural capital. To be more comprehensible, the cultural goods and any certificates can also show student's cultural capital. The improvement of student's attitudes, preferences, behaviors and credentials towards the culture of people from high social status can be noted during daily practices. Teachers can make notes on whether students change let say from indiscipline to discipline, from demotivated to motivated, or becoming more interested in reading. Teachers can use rubrics to see whether the expected changes happen to the students or not. Though measuring soft data is not as simple as the hard data, measuring the improvement of cultural is still possible to be conducted. The improvement of student's cultural capital can be used as the indicator of the success of the education.

## Conclusion

Any tests, including the national examinations (UN), is not valid to measure the success of education, especially of 2013 curriculum since the ultimate goals of this curriculum is improving student's attitudes, competences and knowledge. Tests can only measure knowledge. Therefore, measuring the improvement of student's cultural capital will be better. Teachers can conduct observations, use portfolio and rubrics to measure the improvement. Though it needs long process to do it, but it can tell us the real success of education.

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