

## MERCANTILISM OF KNOWLEDGE IN EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY AT MELATI SUKMA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DENPASAR

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### ABSTRACT

This study discusses "Mercantilism of Knowledge in Education: a Case Study at Melati Sukma Elementary School Denpasar". The matter observed is a shift of educational paradigm, from enlightenment paradigm into instrumental paradigm. When the system of market economy influenced the Indonesian economic system in 1960s or in the beginning of 1970s, which is now getting more materialistic-capitalistic, social organizations such as educational organizations (read: schools) have found it difficult to avoid it. This study aims at exploring why the management of Melati Sukma Elementary School Denpasar has implemented "mercantilism of knowledge" in education, and why the consumers have accepted it. This study also aims at identifying the mechanism of how "mercantilism of knowledge" has occurred at Melati Sukma Elementary School Denpasar, and its implications on the pupils, the school, the learning-teaching process, and on the community.

Qualitative method was employed for conducting the research. In this context, various types of information related to why the school management has implemented the mercantilism of knowledge, the mechanism of how it has occurred, and its implications on the pupils, the school, the process of learning and teaching process in the classrooms, and the community were obtained. *Firstly*, problems were identified, *then* theories for examining the data were selected, *later* the primary and secondary data were collected, *next* the selected data were analyzed and interpreted. *Finally*, the report writing and the results of the research were constructed. The theories employed are Commodification theory, Hegemony theory, and Deconstruction theory.

The results are as follows: *firstly*, those which have been responsible for the mercantilism of knowledge are the fact that the teachers have been getting marginalized from the process of national development, the system of market economy and the consumptive attitude of the community including the teachers have been getting stronger. The parents' motivation to send their children to that school has also been included in the first result. *Secondly*, the mercantilism of knowledge at Melati Sukma Elementary School has also been implemented through the domination, hegemony, and power of the school management over the pupils' parents in the forms of sales of various industrial products, provision for additional lessons, and other types of payments. *Thirdly*, the mercantilism of knowledge has also resulted from the attempts made by the school

management to make the school look more glorious. The learning process has not been oriented towards the attempts made to increase the pupils' intelligence but towards the economic advantages. Where the parents will send their children does not depend on the quality of education but on the prestige instead.

**Key words:** mercantilism of knowledge, education, system of market economy, marginalization of teachers in the developmental process

## INTRODUCTION

This dissertation discusses "Mercantilism of Knowledge in Education: A Case Study at Melati Suksma Elementary School Denpasar". What is observed is the learning mechanism at the school because of the influence of the system of market economy in the Indonesian economy that has gradually taken place since 1970s or in the end of 1960s. Such a system has unintentionally made state schools and private schools have different positions. The private schools have found it easy to follow the flow of the market economy (being caught in the mercantilism of knowledge), while state schools have found it difficult to follow the flow of the market economy. Consequently, private schools have appeared to be commercial educational institutions.

Related to what has been described above, several problems have appeared in the implementation of

education especially at some favorite elementary schools or those that are considered superior. There has been a gap between what is ideally expected (*das sein*) that schools should serve to develop and form the civilization of the nation and the fact (*das sollen*) that many educational institutions (read: schools) have been made arena for obtaining economic advantages. The particular problem observed is the occurrence of the mercantilism of knowledge in education that has made the poor find it more difficult to acquire education of good quality. On the other hand, it is stated in the applicable rules and regulations that every citizen reserves the right to acquire education of good quality. There are three main problems discussed in this study. *First*, why has the school management implemented the mercantilism of education and the consumers have accepted it. *Second*, how has the

mercantilism of knowledge occurred in education? *Third*, what are its implications on the pupils, the school institution, the learning process in the classrooms, and on the community.

In general, this study aims at describing the factors leading to the appearance of the mercantilism of knowledge in education at Melati Sukma Elementary School Denpasar; explaining the mechanism of how the mercantilism of knowledge in education at Melati Sukma Elementary School Denpasar has taken place; and deconstructing the ideology and truth hiding behind the high cost of education at the basic education level, particularly at Melati Sukma Elementary School Denpasar. In particular, this study aims at: *firstly*, exploring why the school management has implemented the mercantilism of knowledge in education and the consumers have accepted it; *secondly*, explaining the mechanism of why the mercantilism of knowledge in education has taken place; and *thirdly*, analyzing the implications of the mercantilism of knowledge in education on the pupils, the school institution, the learning process in the class rooms, and on the community.

The academic benefits of this study are: *first*, the wider framework of thinking as to why the mercantilism of knowledge in education has occurred at the school can be revealed; *second*, the way of thinking concerning the extension of the global capitalistic ideology influencing the educational world can be contributed ; and *third*, the starting point for further studies concerning the mercantilism of knowledge in education applying approaches of cultural studies or paradigm of critical theory can be established.

In addition, practically, this study is useful to the governmental elements, educational doers, and all the related parties (stakeholders) such as headmasters, teachers, school committee, foundations running private schools, and the pupils' parents. This study will enable them to understand the responsibility and function of the school as an educational institution better. It is responsible for developing and forming the ability and civilization of the nation. It is responsible for sharpening the nation's life. Alternatives will be recommended for both the central government and the regional government for formulating the public policy (the

applicable rules and regional regulations) related to how to strengthen and establish the educational implementation especially at the basic level.

## **MATERIAL AND DISCUSSION**

Qualitative method was employed to conduct the research presenting the mercantilism of knowledge in education especially at the basic level. In this research the causing factors, various forms of mercantilism of knowledge occurring at Melati Sukma Elementary School Denpasar, its implications on the pupils, the school institution, the learning process in the classrooms, and on the community were identified. In the first stage, the data both primary and secondary were collected. In the second stage, the theories were selected for examining the data. In the third data, the selected data were analyzed and interpreted. In the fourth stage, the results of the research were written and constructed. To achieve those objectives, the theory of commodification, the theory of hegemony, and the theory of deconstruction were employed.

The results of the study can be described as follows. *Firstly*, with regard

to the factors responsible for the appearance of the mercantilism of knowledge in education especially at elementary schools, the following can be reported. The marginalization of teachers from the national development, the culture of reputation and the motivation of the parents to send their children to such a school, and the educational politics of the government have caused the mercantilism of knowledge in education to take place.

*Secondly*, viewed from the analysis of the mechanism of how the mercantilism of knowledge in education has taken place can be reported as follows. In fact, the mercantilism of knowledge in education at the school, where the research was conducted, has been created through such refined and systematic relations of domination, hegemony, and power between the school management and the pupils' parents that the latter are less aware that the mercantilism of knowledge keeps going on. The mechanism of how the mercantilism of knowledge has taken place especially at elementary school level is through the sales of various industrial products, printed products, clothing industry, banking industry (insurance company), and even food

products such as the fast food products produced by McDonald.

*Thirdly*, from the analysis of the implications of the mercantilism of knowledge in education, it has been revealed that the dominant structure of power has been becoming stronger, because in the process of implementing education, among those who are involved such as the teachers, the headmaster, the school committee, and the foundation, as far as private schools are concerned, there has been an interaction through the process of decision making. There is always a chance to do something, especially among the teachers, the headmaster, the foundation, and the school committee as the dominant parties. In this context, the school can serve as the arena to play in. Then, in such a play, there is an attempt to compete to get and pawn economic, social and intellectual capitals. Therefore, an educational board has been established to control how education is implemented in a regency or municipality. In this case, with reference to the Decision Letter of the Minister of National Education Number 44/U/2002, a regent or a major is appointed. Such a condition will also influence the election of the school committee. This means that

those who have social, intellectual and economic capitals will be elected the school committee. Therefore, there will also be a structure at school, which then makes the process of decision-making elite-based instead of mass-based. Thus, the school can function as the arena, where economic capital, social capital and intellectual capital can be exchanged. This will probably take place through the process of domination and hegemony when decisions are made by the foundation, the headmaster, and the teachers, which are then legalized by the school committee.

## NOVELTY

There are several novelties in this study. The *first* novelty is that the mercantilism of knowledge in education at elementary school has taken place through a mechanism which is so refined and systematic that the pupils' parents are less aware of this. The mercantilism of knowledge in education has been being more developed, because the community has the ideology that what is expensive is good in quality, and that what is cheap is not good in quality. The fact is that this is not to be taken for granted. Such a mentality is made use of

by the school management to arrange the funds for educational compensation, as it likes. In other words, it has done what is called the mercantilism of knowledge in education.

*Secondly*, the mercantilism of knowledge in education at the school where the research was conducted has been made to appear by dominating and hegemonizing the community's way of thinking with various nice jargons such as 'a school of democracy', 'in this era which schools are cheap?', "high cost is needed for purchasing books to widen the pupils' insight, and many more jargons.

*Thirdly*, the mercantilism of knowledge in education at the school where the research was conducted has also been made to appear by making use of the power among the foundation, the headmaster, the teachers, and the school committee. This has taken place through the process of seizing and pawning the economic, social, and intellectual capitals. Then, the position of the dominating parties such as the foundation, the headmaster, the teachers and the school committee is getting stronger, because the school committee is headed by head of the foundation, the secretary to the committee is the

secretary to the foundation, and even the school committee members are the pupils' parents who are still related to the foundation structure. In this way, the position of the school committee as the controlling board at the school is weak.

*Fourthly*, high cost should be matched with excellent service such as availability of adequate facilities, preparation of professional human resources (teaching staff) and effective and efficient learning process. However, what has happened at the school where the research was conducted is that the teaching facilities such as OHP, LCD and Laptop have been available for reputation instead of for betterment of learning quality. The reason is that only one unit of each teaching facility of OHP, LCD, and Laptop is available, whereas the classes needing such facilities are 22. Furthermore, with regard to the academic and competence qualification of the teaching staff referring to the Ministerial Regulations Number 16 of Year 2007, it should be at least either S-1 or D-4 in education (SD/MI/PGSD/PGMI). However, at the school where the research was conducted, no teaching staff has the qualification of either S-1 or D-4 in education (SD/MI/PGSD/PGMI).

*Fifthly*, viewed from the learning process at the school where the research was conducted, it has not referred to the national education standard (SNP) as stated in the Regulations Number 19 Number 2005. On the other hand, the school frequently refers to quality as the label for motivating the parents to send their children there. Consequently, they do not mind spending more money on educational compensation with an expectation that they will get a good quality of education for their children.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the research is that the mercantilism of knowledge in education taking place at the school where the research was conducted has resulted from several factors, such as (1) the marginalization of the teachers from the process of the national development; (2) the culture of reputation and the motivation of the parents to send their children to that school; (3) the educational politics of the government. The evidence that the mercantilism of knowledge in education has taken place is that on one hand the pupils make many types of payment to the school, but

on the other hand, the eight national education standards (SNP) as stated in the Regulations Number 10 of Year 2005 have not been achieved yet. The mercantilism of knowledge in education has been made to appear through the process of domination, the process of hegemony, and the process of playing with power among the teachers, the headmaster, the foundation, and the school committee when decisions are made. The process of domination, the process of hegemony, and the process of playing with power have been so refined and systematic that the parents as the consumers are less aware of this. Therefore, the mercantilism of knowledge in education has kept going on without any meaningful obstacles.

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