

NATIONAL EXAMINATION IN PERSPECTIVE OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at identifying the factors contributing to why the policy on national examination is given priority, how the policy on national examination is presented in the system of educational management, its implication and representation in the system of educational management applied in Senior High School in Tabanan.

The critical theories such as the theory of hegemony, the theory of social practice and the theory of management in the perspective of critical pedagogy were eclectically used in the present study. Qualitative method using the approach of cultural studies was employed. The data were collected using participatory observation, in-depth interview and documentation study. The data were validated using triangulation method and descriptive-qualitative technique.

The result of the study showed that the factors contributing to why the policy on national examination was given priority were educational politics and state policy, socio-cultural and global influence. The policy on national examination was represented in the school and class management by the agents within and outside school. The implication was that there was such a coalition among the agents that all the students would pass the national examination. The process of how the national examination was undertaken and the result which appeared to be good (all the students passed turned out to be hyperreality. Therefore, it was necessary to reconstruct the national education.

Keywords: national examination, educational politics, state policy, critical pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

In 1945 Constitution and its amendment, it is stated that education is one of human rights. As a cultural practice, State, through the developmental program it undertakes, should be responsible for education. In fact, the quality of education in Indonesia is relatively low. The result of the research conducted by the United Nations for Development Program (UNDP) in 2004 and 2005 showed that, out of 117 countries, Indonesia was the 111th in regard to education. In 2005 it was reported that, among 177 countries, Indonesia was the 117th, and in 2012 it was reported that it was the 124th among 187 countries in regard to the achievement of the Human Development Index which included health, economy and education as the indicators (Ramzah, 2005; 61; Chan,2010: 41; <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends/>)

As an attempt to improve the quality of education, the dominant structure (State) issues policies such as 20% of the National Budget/the Regional Budget is allocated for education and national examination is conducted. To give space and legality for the national examination, those which belong to the dominant structure such as the executive, legislative, and judicative bodies collaborate. The regulations such as the Act No. 20 Year 2003 concerning national education and the Government Act No. 19 Year 2005 concerning the standard of national education were issued. The national education was established to have the image of being the best method in standardizing the quality of national education. In Kompas (14 May 2007, p. 12), it was stated that the national examination could be used as means of improving the quality of education, and in the Bali Post (23 March 2010, p. 7) it was stated by Vice President, Boediono, that the national education was intended to improve the standard of education.

The national education had been undertaken since 2005 and the result was assumed to be surprising for the reason that the number of students who could pass the national education kept going up nationally, and it was reported that more than 90% of students passed. The result obtained from the national examination was an indicator of the quality of education, and it was the peak of achievement. However, if viewed from the critical pedagogy, there were hidden missions. It was predicted that those who were involved in conducting the national examination were not neutral;

they had particular interests and ideologies; they served particular power; as result, there were several parties which were marginalized. Therefore, it was interesting to be explored from the perspective of cultural studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The national examination, in its implementation, involved all structures starting from the central government to the regional government especially schools. Bureaucratically, schools which are under the ministry of education and culture are dominated in such a way that they should implement the policy on the national examination as the product of the dominant structure. There is a strong hierarchical structural pressure from the dominant structure.

The available related texts (the Act of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 Year 2003 concerning the System of National Education and the Governmental Regulation No. 19 Year 2005 concerning the Standard of Educational Education) indicate that there is a process of hegemony of the dominant structure over the structures below it such as the schools/students. State, with its cultural dualism, can establish binary opposition in the national examination such as passing it or failing to pass it. The agents that are involved in the national examination label the passing position good and failing position bad; as a result, the latter is marginalized. Such a condition causes the agents to seek after the passing position as a marker of achievement and prestige, denotatively and connotatively.

With reference to what is stated by Bourdieu (in Fashri, 2007: 83; Harker, 2009: 13), a school is a social arena where various agents perform their social activities in such a way that all students will pass the national examination. In performing the social activities or the social practices, there is dialectic between the agents and the structure both within and outside the school. The target of the actors is that all the students can pass the national examination. Such a habit has been a routine and keeps going on; as a result what is referred to as habitus has taken place. Ideologies, capitals, and power play such roles that the target that all the students can pass can be achieved. The actors can play their roles within and outside the school involving the provincial/regency governments, the board of

education, and the other stakeholders. Giddens (2009) state that, as a structural duality, the agents and the structure depend on one another.

All the structures play their roles to achieve the target that all the students can pass the national examination, which then give a good image to the agents. The bad result of the national examination may give bad impact on their prestige and prospect. They are mentally supposed to keep the achievement that all the students should always pass the national examination; even the students are extremely scared that they cannot pass the national examination.

The national examination as a text of the best method has turned out to be biased. Although the national examination is seen to be safe and smooth on the surface, it hides the practices which deviate from its slogan and POS. The slogan propagandized by the dominant structure “achievement is yes, but being honest is a must” is only a discourse. The structures involved in the national examination give priority to achievement instead of honesty. They do their best so that all the students can pass the national examination. They are scared that the students will fail, as the text is already established. The national examination is symbolized using marks. All do their best to achieve high marks, showing that they are successful; however, honesty is sacrificed. Being honest in implementing the national examination is not surprising; passing it and becoming the best in it are surprising.

The massive cheating is like the peak of an ice mount. Being scared about failing to pass the national examination, the students do what they can so that they all can pass. What they do is far from being good. The national examination should be used as a means of forming the students’ character; however, the opposite has taken place. Culturally, achievement is everything; as a result, conscience is neglected. More deviations take place in the class room.

The texts produced by the dominant structure for the determining for the passing grade for the students have turned out to be inconsistent and contradictory; this tend to lead to discrimination, unfairness and marginalization. Therefore, it is necessary to deconstruct such texts. Deconstruction does not only mean deconstructing the ideologies which support the national examination practice but also the ideology of the binary opposition in which one thing is put on the top and

others are marginalized, meaning that the center dominates the marginalized which then causes violence with its various forms to take place.

Before the standard of the national education as stipulated in the Government Regulation No. 19/2005 can be fulfilled, it will be better that the result obtained from the national examination will not be used to determine the passing grade for the students; it will be better if it is used to map the national quality of education. It is necessary to deconstruct the national examination which is used to determine the passing grade for the students. Whether the students will pass or not is left for the schools to decide. The national examination which only tests the students' cognitive ability using objective test needs to be reconstructed by combining the objective test and essay test or portfolio in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotoric domains. The national examination, as a process of evaluation or an integral part of the educational and learning process should give freedom to the students as the subject to choose what subjects to be nationally examined.

The ministry of education and culture and the schools under it should make honesty part of culture. It is common that some students fail in the national examination which is not necessarily tabooed. As a baby that has just learned to walk, falling cannot be avoided. Honesty is something which is so sweet; however, it will have the risk of being bitter, if someone fails. Those who have been committed to being honest should be prepared to welcome welfare (Quote, 2011).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The national examination, which has the image of becoming the best method for determining the national quality of education, has led to a collective practice (structural duality) to make it successful. Such a practice quantitatively shows a significant result, indicating that the quality of education has improved. However, viewed from the critical pedagogy, in such a success there are hidden missions, ideologies, capitals, and interests in serving the ruler by marginalizing others such as the students' uniqueness, non-examination subjects, honesty, and process. Therefore, it is necessary to deconstruct such a text to make the marginalized more participative.

It is suggested that the national examination should be undertaken based on its mandate and slogan after the Government Regulation No. 19/2005 can be equally and fairly implemented. The national examination should equalize the cognitive, affective and psychomotoric aspects and the values of honesty of the students and agents involved in it.

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