

# Curriculum Development in Indonesian Education

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## Abstrak

Pendidikan Indonesia telah belangsung selama berabad-abad mengikuti perkembangan sejarah, ekonomi, politik masyarakat Indonesia. Pendidikan Indonesia sejalan dengan tumbuh kembangnya kerajaan-kerajaan di Nusantara dan juga masuknya agama-agama besar di Indonesia seperti Hindu, Budha maupun Islam. Namun perkembangan pendidikan modern di Indonesia diawali dengan masuknya kolonial bangsa barat ke Indonesia. Setelah Indonesia merdeka, pemerintah terus menerus melakukan pembangunan pendidikan secara nasional di seluruh wilayah NKRI. Pembangunan pendidikan tidak bias terlepas dari pengembangan kurikulum karena kurikulum adalah inti dari proses pembelajaran. Kurikulum disusun dan dikembangkan sesuai kebutuhan siswa, sekolah, masyarakat serta tuntutan jaman.

## Background of Study

Education is very crucial to cultivate human resources to keep the existence and to ensure the bright future of the nation. We can not fully dependent on the natural resources to survive, we need a skillful worker as an economic and productive agent to produce industrial product and service for our daily necessities. Education is the key to keep the survival of human being as an individual and a member of society. Zainudin Maliki(Jawa Pos, June 10,2008) says that education functions as a medium to transfer knowledge, technology and cultural heritage. It also functions to train human being to be expert in economic or business activity.

Indonesian Ministry of National Education states that education is intended to build and develop Indonesian society that is democratic, competitive, well developed, prosperous, faithful in God, mastering science and technology, highly disciplined and dedicated. Those statement shows that children are the invaluable asset for the future of nation. The other points are learning needs good learning environment and well standard facility, learning activity needs interconnection and interrelation among society members, and education is a never ending job for human being. Lodge states that life is education and education is life(Muhaimin et al,2001). Therefore, education as integral part of human life must contribute to the improvement of living standard of the society such as advancing technology to support human activity, promoting mutual cooperation among nations and others.

Education activity is always affected by common problem in daily life like economy, politics, culture and the development of science and technology. Colin Marsh and Paul Morris(1991) say that education in particular curriculum is always determined by some factors like politics, national identity, economy, religion and knowledge development. Life is progressive and human being always progresses as long as his life. Transfer of product and traveling across national border are very common in today's life, accordingly education must advance itself to meet the current situation and prepare for the unpredictable future.

Beeby and Levin say that education is closely connected to politics and education policy is often affected by politics(Dedi Supriadi,2003). When Hongkong was transferred to China, education policy in this territory changed following the policy and political interest of the new authority. Ikuo Amano(1984) states that politics has a big portion among other factors like economic, social and academic factor to control education policy and politicians tend to manipulate education for their interest to win the voters in

the general election. Politics actually must be used to support education program in order to build peaceful social order, achieve modernization and economic affluence of society.

This paper tries to study the development of curriculum in line with the progress of Indonesian society. It is helpful for us to trace back what we have done to advance Indonesian education and what we should do to improve our national education standard.

### **Indonesian Education and Curriculum Development**

Education activity in Indonesia formally began in 1537, when Portugal occupied Indonesia. Portugal like other colonial countries built the school to supply the workers for trading, estates, industry, agriculture, and other business activity. Under Portugal's occupation, education policy was implemented locally. The school was only built in Ambon, eastern part of Indonesia. Education activity that operated throughout the country began in 1900, it was connected to ethical policy when the Dutch occupied Indonesia. But the goal of education policy under the Dutch's occupation was not different from that before, it was just to secure economic interest of the colonial.

In the early of independence, education is totally focused on national character building to throw away the influence of the Dutch. A big leap in education policy happened in the early time of President Soeharto's administration. The government started mass education for primary education. The government built hundred thousand elementary schools throughout the country, recruited hundred thousand elementary school teachers and led the children to attend the school. And it is common that mass education results in low quality and accountability (Dedi Supriadi, 2003). Until recent time, Indonesia still faces some critical problems of education such as education quality, equal access to education, and autonomy of education. The government has done many actions to tackle education problems, but the problems run faster than what the government does. During the administration of President Soeharto, education must be in line with the sustainable five year development plan centering on political stability and economic growth. Many school subjects are interfered by the political interest of the authority except a few subjects that are relatively free from political interference such as Math and basic science.

Vision of national education is to build a peaceful, democratic, strong, modern society to acquire science and technology to preserve national arts and culture. While mission of national education is to strengthen the socio-cultural Indonesian identity filled with dynamic creativity and the ability to face globalization era. In this era, national education faces some challenging problems like globalization, the advance of information technology, the development of science, the development of teaching technology, and English is intended to prepare the students for work life (profession) and world life (life skill).

We need curriculum to bring the vision and mission of education into reality. Curriculum is the main machine of education process. Education reform means to develop and advance the curriculum to keep abreast with the current situation and the coming life of student. Richards et al. (1992) explains that curriculum is an educational program consist of educational objectives, content, teaching procedures learning experiences, and assessment. While Marsh and Stafford define curriculum as an interrelated set of plan and experience which student completes under the guidance of the school. In light of this problem, curriculum development covers the development of

materials, teaching procedures, learning experience and evaluation. To develop curriculum there are some points to deal with like basic conception of curriculum, philosophical basis of curriculum and psychological basis of curriculum.

### **Basic Conception of Curriculum**

Further, Marsh and Morris(1991) propose some basic conceptions to design curriculum. They are as follows:

#### **a. Information Processing Orientation**

This concept suggests that curriculum should promote cognitive aspect of learner to understand and analyze the fact and knowledge. It means that the content of curriculum concentrates on promoting thinking skill of learner and the content of curriculum ranges from the simple learning experience to the complex one.

#### **b. Behavior Modification Orientation**

The content of curriculum consists of an observable learning performance. Learning is an observable behavior and successful learning is determined by achieving successful performance of the defined learning objective.

#### **c. Social Interaction Orientation**

This concept is intended to help learner understand himself, others and make better human relationship as a member of society. The learner has to comprehend his own view of the world, beliefs and values, and yet sensitive to the beliefs and values of others.

#### **d. Personal Development Orientation**

This orientation allows the learner to construct and organize his own reality and all learning experiences are geared to the purposes of individual. The content of curriculum is mainly to achieve full potential of learner.

Curriculum designer has to allow for some important problems in designing what the best is for the learner to study such as school circumstance, student's need, job market, progressive situation of society and so forth. Knowing those facts, curriculum designer can design the curriculum based on information processing orientation, behavior modification orientation, social interaction orientation and personal development orientation. It is also possible to use eclectic method by combining some basic conceptions of curriculum so that the curriculum is flexible to adapt to the unpredictable situation of learning activity. H.H. Stern says that curriculum can be unidimensional and multidimensional(Johnson,1989). Unidimensional curriculum is a single oriented curriculum and covers limited and narrow learning experience, while multidimensional curriculum has variety of orientation and covers broad and variety of learning material.

### **Philosophical Basis of Curriculum**

According to Meriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, philosophy has the meanings like a search for general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative rather than observational means, an analysis of the grounds of and concepts expressing fundamental beliefs, a theory underlying or regarding a sphere of activity or thought, the most general beliefs, concepts, and attitudes of an individual or group. Philosophical basis is important as a guideline to design curriculum. But it needs conscious and deliberate action to apply philosophical basis in curriculum development regarding local circumstance, learner's potential and learner's need. Cook and Doll(1973) state that philosophical basis of curriculum consists of laissez faire, existentialism,

perennialism, pragmatism, reconstructionism and eclectism. The philosophical basis of curriculum is described as follows:

a. Laissez Faire

It suggests that learning depends on the learner's intention and need. Learner should be free from the restriction or organized preplanned curriculum. School or teacher just facilitates what the learner is going to do, study and what the learner wants to achieve during the learning process.

b. Existentialism

It is related to laissez faire that learning focuses on self choosing and rejecting authority. Every individual has own choices and needs. The curriculum has to facilitate the learner to determine his own choice and fulfill his own need.

c. Perennialism

It is oriented to empower and discipline human's mind in analyzing the facts, comprehending the knowledge, and understanding what is going on. Education has an objective to develop intellect through mind disciplining and fixed theory in the past is supposed to be relevant to solve the similar problem of current situation. Perennialism consists of idealism and realism. Idealism is concerned with conserving our heritage of knowledge of values, ideas, customs, and traditions. Idealism is characterized by some points as follows:

- All reality exists only as it is experienced by mind.
- Discipline during the formative years must be imposed but student must be led to be self directed and self motivated.
- The students need to be guided into profession and vocation.
- Learning skills must be used in serving the community and not merely as money making possession.
- Students must respect the minority's opinion.
- Truth is the same today as yesterday.
- Truth is definite and absolute.
- Universe is an expression of intelligence and will.
- Teacher is a model of complete or perfect individual.

Realism is concerned with the things and facts. If knowledge is not applicable in real situation, it is useless and should be dropped from the curriculum. Like idealism, realism believes that school's main function is to conserve the knowledge. It should be gathered, organized, systematized, and dispensed to the learner.

d. Pragmatism

Pragmatism deals with some points as follows:

- Children are naturally equipped with the desires to investigate, construct, and communicate their thoughts to others.
- Learning comes from insight and is intended to arouse creativity.
- Educate the children to look at change of the world intelligently.
- Materials are related to student's background.
- Teach the children to think respectively and creatively.
- Teacher is a facilitator in the learning process.
- Learning is learn how to learn, it means that method is more important than subject matter because education is doing intelligently what we are living or approaching life's problems empirically.

#### e. Reconstructionism

Human life is always surrounded by problem. To survive means to be able to resolve the existing problem. Human need an approach or a strategy to deal with the problem, and human masters the approach through education. According to reconstructionism, education must be able to reconstruct social condition. Education must contribute the social development and living standard improvement. It means that education has to promote democracy, peaceful social order, and economic standard of society.

#### f. Eclectism

It is a philosophical basis of curriculum that is built by combining the elements of philosophical basis of curriculum. Education is not a single subject with narrow and limited angle to deal with. Education is complex and has multi facets. To deal with education problem needs holistic action and includes multi elements. To adapt to the complex problem of society, curriculum has to be built based on multi elements of philosophical basis of curriculum. Eclectism is aimed at achieving full potential of learner and is constructed based on the knowledge of children, how they develop and learn the culture in which they operate.

To know philosophical basis of curriculum is essential for any element involved in education activity. The school or teacher in the countries where curriculum is centralized to the central government, the understanding of philosophical basis of curriculum helps the teacher adapt the definite national curriculum to the current situation of the school and the school members in order to get satisfactory achievement of learning activity.

### **Psychological Basis of Curriculum**

Aside from the discussion of philosophical basis of curriculum, Cook and Doll also propose the other fundamental theory to construct curriculum, and it is related to the psychological study. Psychological basis of curriculum covers the points as follows:

#### a. Unfoldment

According to this concept, learner is a subject in the learning activity. Learner is free from the restriction and authority of definite curriculum. Curriculum and learning activity should follow learner's need and expectation. Learner decides what he wants to study and what skill he wants to master.

#### b. Apperception

This concept suggests that learning is a process of associating new ideas with the ideas or facts that exist in the learner's mind. Herbart proposes five steps in learning such as preparation, presentation, comparison, generalization, and application. Preparation means to create condition that makes the learner ready to acquire the new knowledge. Presentation means to instill the learning material in the student. Comparison means to lead the student to compare the previous knowledge and the new knowledge he is learning now. Generalization means to make a conclusion or to build a knowledge from the facts or knowledge that exists in the learner's mind and the facts or knowledge he acquires now. Application means to understand the fact or knowledge and be able to apply it in the real situation. Herbartian notion suggests that the material that is relevant to the students' background and experience can drive interest and motivation among the students to study.

### c. Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud is the pioneer in this field. To create better atmosphere of learning activity and achieve satisfactory level of learning, the students must be free from the mental burden. To make the students enjoy learning activity, we have to throw away the barrier of learning such as feeling bad, emotional situation, and others. Learning activity runs well when the students are away from the mental barriers. The teacher must be aware of students' feeling and emotion before he begins the class. He has to create the condition that lowers the students' tension and emotion and improves the readiness of students to study.

### d. Connectionism or Stimulus-Response Theory

It is proposed by Thorndike. He says that learning results in a biological change involving a process of connecting a mental with a physical, a mental with a mental, a physical with a physical or a physical with a mental. Thorndike proposes three primary laws of learning like readiness, exercise and effect. The first step is to make the students aware of what he learns. Then, give the students the learning material and ask the students' response by exercising the learning material. And the last step is to lead the students to apply what they have learned in the real situation.

### e. Behaviorism

It is still connected to connectionism or stimulus-response theory. This concept suggests that every individual is born with basic and instinctive pattern of behavior and learning occurs when a conditioned-response pattern is present.

### f. The Work of Piaget

Piaget says that learning activity should adapt to the mental and physical development of learner. Piaget defines child's development into some developmental stages such as sensory motor stage, pre-operational stage, concrete operation, and formal operation. Sensory motor stage takes place during the first two year of baby. In this stage, child understands an object with physical and motor responses. Pre-operational stage takes place at the age of seven or thereabouts. In this stage, child learns to extract concept from experience and later to make perceptual and intuitive judgment. Concrete operation stage takes place when a child is at the age of seven until eleven. In this stage, a child learns physical problem by anticipating consequences perceptually. Formal operation stage takes place at the age of late child and early adolescence. In this stage, a youngster learns to think hypothetically and to theorize and experiment. The work of Piaget leads the teacher and curriculum designer to design the curriculum in line with the development of learner. Level of difficulty of learning material has to follow the developmental stage of learner. Learning is useless when the level of difficulty of learning material beyond the developmental stage of learner.

### g. Gestalt

This concept is the work of cognitive field theorist. According to cognitive field theorist, behavior occurs in life space(thought) rather than in observable space. Learning is a relativistic process by which individual changes old ideas and develops new insights, all within interdependent factor. Learning is the results of responses of the whole organism when it interacts with its total environment. Curriculum designer who follows this idea tries to design a curriculum that relates to the learner's background, poses meaningful problems, allows for individual differences and specific psychological needs, and emphasizes the whole before considering the parts.

Curriculum is not a single factor in education process. It is interconnected to other elements. Tanner and Tanner(1980) say that learner, society and curriculum are the fundamental factors in education process. To design curriculum means to define learning experiences and objectives to meet the need of learner, the preference of society and the development of science and technology. Giles et al. say that there are some points to consider in curriculum design such as identifying objectives, selecting the means for attaining objectives, organizing the means and evaluating outcomes (Tanner and Tanner, 1980). Tyler proposes some questions in curriculum design as follows: what educational purposes should the school attain? What educational experiences can be provided to attain the purposes? How are experiences organized? How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? ( ibid, 1980). Taba defines some steps in curriculum design like diagnosis of needs, formulation of objective, selection of content, organization of content, selection of learning experiences, organization of learning experiences and determination of what to evaluate and of the ways and means of doing it(ibid,1980). Giles et al, Tyler and Taba give us a guideline to process curriculum deliberately.

The government especially Indonesian Ministry of Education is very concerned with curriculum as the main problem of education. Curriculum reform began soon after Indonesia gained independence. It was curriculum 1947 and implemented in 1950. The curriculum still continued the curriculum by the Dutch and five principles of national ideology(Pancasila) was introduced to the students as the main basis of national education. Curriculum 1947 emphasizes personality, national character building and course content is related to everyday life. The government revised curriculum in 1952, it was curriculum 1952. The curriculum was intended to promote the learner's potentials such as moral, creativity, skill or productive work, and art. The curriculum covers course contents related to moral, intelligence, emotional function, skill, and health education. In the beginning era of President Soeharto, the government set up curriculum 1968. Curriculum 1968 concentrates on the promotion of cognitive aspect and thinking skill among the students. The course contents for primary and secondary education include moral and national ideology, basic knowledge like Math, Indonesian language and local language, and other subjects such basic science, social science, foreign language, art, handicraft and health education. The government revised the curriculum again in 1975, it was called curriculum 1975. Curriculum 1975 was designed based on the strategy called management by objective. The central of curriculum development defines learning objective for the students to achieve. Curriculum 1975 covers detail points of learning activity like general instructional objective, specific instructional objective, material, teaching media, and evaluation. The course content of curriculum 1975 is not different from that before. The government introduced new curriculum in 1984, it was curriculum 1984. Curriculum 1984 emphasizes process skill approach, it means teaching is to teach the students how to learn. Curriculum 1984 introduced credit system for high school students to finish the study. The course content of curriculum 1984 is the same as that before, but new subject called history of national struggle(PSPB) was introduced to the students from elementary school until university level.

Due to the autonomy constitution 1999, education is decentralized to the local, provincial and district government. The government delegates the authority in education activity to the local board of education, even to the school or teacher. The government

sets up new curriculum, it is curriculum 2006 or popularly called school based curriculum. It is still continuing curriculum 2004 but the school or teacher is open to modify the national curriculum allowing for school characteristics, students' background, and the interest of stakeholder

Curriculum 2006 is the development of curriculum 2004. Curriculum 2004 or competence based curriculum operates nationally based on the government regulation no. 25/2002. Competency based teaching is an approach to teaching which focuses on mastery of the skills or competencies needed in different domains(Richards et al,1992). Hall and Jones(1976) define competency as a statement that describes the observable demonstration of a composite of the specific skills. It is a description of performances that are based on the acquisition, integration, composite building and application of a set of related skills and knowledge. In the competence based curriculum, learning objectives are clearly defined so their accomplishment can be observed in the form of specified learner behavior or knowledge and minimum level of achievement of these objectives are established as a criterion of success. Further, Hall and Jones state that not all the students in a group learn the same amount of material in a set period of time, therefore learning module is needed in competence based curriculum.

According to the government regulation no.25/2002, the central government draws the learner's competence standard and controls the national curriculum, the national evaluation and its realization of guidelines; while local board of education develops learners' competence standard in kindergarten, elementary school and high school level based on the minimum competence which determined by the central government(Annita,2003). Then, the curriculum should be defined into syllabuses and teaching materials that are connected to the local or district's situation and needs. There are some points to deal with in designing competence based curriculum such as need analysis, competency in certain field, relevant knowledge and skill, and learning experience(ibid,2003).

Curriculum 2006 is popularly called school based curriculum and developed to create better atmosphere of learning activities for the learners(Najid,2006). According to the government regulation no. 19/2005, learning should be interactive, interesting, challenging, arouse high motivation, give enough opportunity to the learner to participate in the learning activity, and encourage the learner to be creative, independent and initiative. Learning material should be in line with the physical and mental development of learner. Curriculum 2006 suggests that a learner must be active to analyze and make inquiry on what he learns and create a new product from what he learned.

Curriculum 2006 is aimed at achieving education objectives based on local characteristics and school circumstance. It is designed and implemented within the school itself. The development of curriculum 2006 follows national education standard to ensure the achievement of national education. National education standard includes content, process, competency, educational staff, facility, management, budget, and evaluation. Content and competence standard are important to design curriculum, syllabus and teaching material. Content standard is a minimum standard for the scope of course content. And competence standard is a minimum standard for the learner's accomplishment of learning objectives; the learner's acquisition of knowledge and the learner's performance of specified behavior. The curriculum gives much space for the learner to do as follows:

- a. learning to be faithful in God
- b. learning for comprehension and internalization
- c. learning to act effectively
- d. learning to live together with other people in the community and global era
- e. learning to develop and comprehend the learner himself through active, creative, effective, and interesting learning activity.

The implementation of curriculum 2006 follows the constitution no. 20/2003 about national education system and the government regulation no. 19/2005 about national education standard. The course content of curriculum 2006 includes the core subject related to religion, the core subject related to moral and citizenship education, the core subject related to science and technology, art, and health education. Then, local content and self development activity are provided for the student in curriculum 2006. Local content facilitates the student to develop skill and knowledge based on the specific characteristics and potential of the region. Local content is decided and developed by the school itself allowing for the student's needs, the school's characteristics, and the expectation of stakeholder. Self development activity is popularly called extra curricular activity or club activity leads the student to develop and express himself through some activities like Boy Scout, counseling, calligraphy, badminton, soccer and other activities.

Student's background, local characteristics, culture, interest, type and level of education are the important points to deal with in designing curriculum 2006. The other important points are the development of science and technology, its relevance to the context and the preference of job market.

The implementation of curriculum 2006 or school based curriculum is not yet satisfactory since the central government does not fully delegate the authority to the school to design the curriculum in line with the school's characteristics and the education objectives of the school. We have some points to deal with this problem such as standar isi (content standard), standar kompetensi lulusan (standard of graduation), and Ujian Nasional (national examination).

Content standard and standard of graduation give limitation to the teacher to do acceleration in designing curriculum allowing for students background and classroom situation. The teacher should follow the central government for any items he will teach to students from content standard and standard of graduation. And we can not deny the fact that learning process in Indonesian schools is fully guided by national examination or ujian nasional. The main job of the teacher is to prepare the students to be the best to finish all the problems of national examination. The teacher can ignore to teach the students about values, spirit, and high motivation to study since the most important thing in Indonesian school is all students can pass national examination.

## **Conclusion**

Education is intended to help learners achieve their full potential. Education is fundamental to keep the nation survive, build social order and reach economic affluence of the country. Education develops and progresses in line with social, political, and economic dynamism of the country. Indonesian education intended to cultivate the mind of students and build strong national character of students.

Curriculum is the main element to operate education activity. Indonesia always develops and modifies the curriculum over and over to make education activity in line

with social dynamism of the country. The recent curriculum development in Indonesia happens in 2006, it is called curriculum 2006 or school based curriculum. The central government delegates the authority to the school to design its own curriculum based on the school characteristics. The school is the expert to know its problems and decide its own goals of education.

The implementation of curriculum 2006 or school based curriculum is not yet satisfactory in Indonesia. In Indonesia, the shortage of professional teachers is crucial to conduct the effective learning activity. And most of Indonesian teachers still depend on the textbook and the syllabus by the central government. The central government still gives strong limitation to the school or the teacher to design the curriculum allowing for the school's characteristics, education objectives of the school, and student background.

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