
NATIONALISM, CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, AND SOCIAL ETHICS: PERSPECTIVES OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to analyze the basic understanding of Vocational High School teachers about the essence of nationalism and critical pedagogy. The research questions are 1) what is the significance of nationalism for Vocational High School teachers? And 2) how do teachers understand critical pedagogy? This research is of qualitative project executed under phenomenological framework. This research involved 40 Vocational High School teachers from various regions in Central Java. The main results of this research are: 1) nationalism is the students' social capital in dealing with the working world, especially in resisting the idea and practice of industrial capitalism; 2) critical education functions to raise students' critical awareness in order to be open and analytical towards phenomena in the working world, such as the practice of capitalism which is detrimental and threatening public welfare; 3) the vocational education of Indonesia faces a major task of reducing capitalism in the practice of industrialization in society. Therefore, an understanding of nationalism and criticism must always be encouraged at all times. It is recommended that the Vocational High School curriculum to strengthen the content of nationalism through the addition of citizenship and history subjects, while critical pedagogy can become a vocational learning approach to build students' critical awareness.

KEYWORDS: nationalism, critical pedagogy, vocational education

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, capitalism becomes a big challenge for Indonesia's education (Fougères, 2005). It has influenced various aspects of Indonesia's life, such as economy, social, culture, politics, and education. A small example of capitalism in education is the high cost of education in Indonesia. In the economic aspect, it is marked by the emergence of various industries (capitalism) in large cities and it becomes evidence that Indonesia has moved towards a capitalist society (Ramesh & Asher, 2000). In addition, Indonesia is currently a target for foreign investments to their exert influence economically and utilize existing human resources. Data on the field shows that even as landowners, many Indonesians work only as laborers in foreign-owned companies. This is a unique phenomenon as Indonesian people have the mindset of workers rather than company owners. For foreigners, on the other hand, this is an opportunity to exert maximum influence, considering that Indonesia is a country that has rich resources and large amount of the need for work (Hughes, 1999; Kahn, 2008). Responding to the need for work and the low work competence of the Indonesian people, the government plans to strengthen the capacity and quality of vocational education (Gill, Fluitman, &

Dar, 2000). The strengthening of capacity is in fact not followed by the inculcation of sufficient national values. Thus, vocational education in Indonesia practically results in working class communities, who do not have the mindset of entrepreneurs. This is certainly not in line with the nature of the vocational education itself. In principle, vocational education should not only produce the working community to meet worker's slot in industries (capitalism) on the pretext of supporting economic development, but also pay attention to ethics and morals as subjects of concern as vocational education graduates must be given a strong understanding of nationalism, citizenship, ideology, and the great dream of the people. It is needed for them to understand where they are heading after completing their studies (Newhouse & Suryadarma, 2011). The occurring case is that the vocational education curriculum in Indonesia is considered still very weak to instill national ethics and morals (Tilak, 2003). Moreover, critical education has not been used as an approach to build students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities as both professionals and citizens (Lee, Grossman, Kennedy, & Fairbrother, 2013).

In the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, education no longer requires teachers to act as the main actors in learning (Puncreobutr, 2016). Currently, the teachers' roles are prioritized in learning planning. Those teachers in vocational schools must pose high intelligence and good social skills in order to shape students' mentality (Anggraini & Kusniarti, 2017). They must pay attention to the material content, in the social-humanities field with very little allotted time, and they are required to be creative and actively collaborate with students to create enjoyable learning. The teachers in vocational schools become role models of work ethic and morality, considering that vocational schools in Indonesia are directed to create the workforce needed by industries that are starting to grow and expanding in various cities in Indonesia. In the development of vocational education curriculum, it turns out that social-humanities science and vocational school teacher competency development are not properly addressed. The impact is that teachers are not shaped to be creative enough in developing their knowledge. Furthermore, the learning approaches and strategies applied still use the classical paradigm in form of lectures and monologues. This is of course considered incompatible with digital and technological developments as the impacts of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

Several studies on teachers and vocational education knowledge have been conducted by Bakar, Gill et al, and Misbah et al. The teachers in vocational education still use the old paradigm of learning. This is because the construction of knowledge in the curriculum does not lead teachers to try new theories and innovative teaching strategies (Bakar, 2014; Gill et al., 2000; Misbah, Gulikers, Maulana, & Mulder, 2015), resulting that vocational education is only intended to meet the needs of workers in factories. Meanwhile, the brighter students prefer to have a career abroad as they have no desire to contribute to the development of their country. In the identification from previous researchers, there are serious problems in vocational education in Southeast Asia in general, including Indonesia. The most fundamental problem is concerning the teachers' understanding of nationalism and critical pedagogy which are beneficial for changing the way of thinking from

conventional vocational education towards vocational education that is integral to the interests of the nation-state.

This research focuses on understanding nationalism (Bastin & Benda, 1968) and critical pedagogy (Kahn & Kahn, 2010) of vocational high school teachers in Central Java, Indonesia. Therefore, this research questions are 1) what is the significance of nationalism for Vocational High School teachers? And 2) how do teachers understand critical pedagogy?

2. METHODS

This research used a qualitative method with a phenomenological design (Creswel, 2009). This research tried to fathom the quality of teachers in vocational schools in responding to capitalism in the community. Capitalism became the phenomenon of this research. Vocational education which has only been intended to prepare workforce for industries, can be said as a form of submission of vocational education to capitalism. The existing fact is that the curriculum in vocational schools is dictatic, shackling teachers for expression, despite the researcher believe that the teachers have their own ideas about ideal vocational education and they certainly have ideas and knowledge about how to educate. Therefore, those various phenomena that exist constitute as the background for the conducting this research.

This research focuses on understanding nationalism and critical pedagogy of teachers in building student awareness. The data needed in this research were data concerning teachers. This research involved 40 vocational high school teachers from Central Java Province. Central Java is a large province in Indonesia which is considered to have a high level of education awareness. Therefore, teachers in Central Java are categorized as influential teachers, because most of them have taken undergraduate education and professionalism education as evidenced by their professional certificates. Referring to the research objectives, data were obtained through in-depth interview techniques as the researcher participated fully in the activities of vocational high school teachers' in the social-humanities field.

This research used the qualitative data analysis of the Creswel Model (Creswel, 2009). The qualitative data analysis can be carried out simultaneously with the process of data collection, data interpretation, and other narrative writings. Coding procedure identification was used in specifying information into certain themes or categories. This research has obtained 6 data transcriptions, which are divided into 3 categories'; 1) ideas (nationalism); 2) competence (critical pedagogy); and 3) social (ethics). Transcription of this research can be explained through code of DS1 (Data Substance 1); DS2 (Data Substance 2); etc

3. RESULTS

Vocational education in Indonesia still adheres to the old system which is subject to the interests of capitalism. The large number of foreign companies in Indonesia makes the needs of workforces very large and vocational education currently aims to meet those needs. In addition, vocational education is not yet aimed at national development. The findings of this research are divided into three segments, namely 1) nationalism is an important aspect to align the interests of the nation-state with the orientation of vocational education; 2) students critical awareness needs to be built to create workers and entrepreneurs who are aware of their rights and responsibilities to the state and corporation; and 3) social ethics can be built through habituation in order to create workers and entrepreneurs who have a good mentality, i.e. workers who are not only obedient to corporate orders but also care about their social environment.

3.1 The Urgency of Nationalism for Vocational Education in Indonesia

Vocational education in Indonesia still prioritizes output quantity over quality. DS1 stated:

"The vocational education curriculum only teaches technicality. There are no aspects of ethics and character that can create students to become workers who have an awareness of norms and ethics. Humanities-social science learning that includes citizenship, history, and culture is only limited to 1 hour per week. This is certainly not realistic to achieve the goals desired by the government. So far, the school is more concerned with the quantity of output rather than its quality, so that alumni only become industrial workers and eventually become supporters of capitalism in Indonesia".

DS4 argued: "all this time, vocational education has not yet been carried out in accordance with the ideals of the country. Actually, it is aimed at building entrepreneurs who have high nationalism so that they are able to support national development". DS6 reinforced the opinion of DS4:

"In reality, vocational education only produces ready-made workforce for global capitalism in Indonesia. As a history teacher, I am actually worried about this situation as we do not have enough time to work on creative activities due to limited subject hours which is only 1 hour per week".

Nationalism is a sidelined aspect in vocational education. There are many cases where graduates of vocational schools work for their own-self, not in the name of national interests. DS2 believed:

"Vocational education is only a tool for country to support the presence of foreign companies in Indonesia. We have performed collaborations where we have a target of 150 workers each year to supply the needs of companies in the Southern Java region. In our education, the nationalism aspect is not a priority. Therefore, many students are looking for work with materialistic calculations, while they are not thinking at all to build countries through their active role in the entrepreneurial world".

3.2 Critical Pedagogy and Student Awareness

So far, vocational education in Indonesia only applies technical and practical approaches as students are rarely invited to think critically and solve a case. DS5 believed:

"Critical pedagogy is something foreign to vocational schools in Indonesia. In learning, teachers tend to use technical approaches and prioritize practicum, whereas case study, problem solving, and social communication are important for character development."

DS2 argued: "Vocational education is still very conventional as teachers only understand one or two learning approaches, while critical pedagogy is only mastered by teachers whose expertise are the socio-humanities field. Critical pedagogy for vocational education is very useful in building student awareness about their rights and responsibilities to the state and corporation. Critical pedagogy teaches deep knowledge and reasoning about one's social position in the community. I am one of those people who apply critical pedagogy in citizenship learning for vocational schools. I use problem-based learning in solving employment problems. My goal is for students to think about their responsibilities and rights when working in the future and contribute to nation building. Such things are familiar in my class."

Strengthening the opinion of DS2, DS6 revealed: "As a history teacher, I also apply critical pedagogy. I also apply discourse analysis criticism in student learning. I usually use old newspapers and magazines that contain trending news about nationality and employment. I have also used ones about the Human Right. The students are quite enthusiastic in discussing the material and I am proud of their response. For me, critical pedagogy is important for vocational schools because it can make learning more contextual."

DS1 elaborated: "critical pedagogy for vocational education is very important. It is evidenced by the number of students from this school who work in Japan, Korea, Singapore, Germany, and very few of them who think of returning to Indonesia. For me, there is a problem in their way of thinking as they are very much ignorant of their country. Critical understanding of nationality in vocational schools is useful for developing students' ways of thinking to be more advanced and responsive in relevance with the circumstances."

3.3 Social Ethics

In many cases, vocational schools alumni do not have social awareness in living in the community. They tend to live individually, so they are easily tempted by the allure of capitalism. It becomes a reality that vocational schools only produce workers for capitalism and supporters for foreign corporations in Indonesia. This fact proves that education in Indonesia has co-opted the interests of global capitalism. This has a direct impact on the objective of education and the policies that surround it. DS1 argued: "social ethic is one of the standards that must be mastered in social-humanities subjects. However, its material proportion is very small and far behind the proportions of mechanical engineering or industrial engineering." DS3 reinforced: "it has an impact on the learning

process which tends to be less organized, so that social ethics aspects are only explained theoretically in sociology subject. Due to that reason, the students do not really understand concerning the true meaning of social ethics and what its practice is like. Another inhibiting factor is the social-humanities subject hours are always placed at the last hour, just before the students go home. This also becomes an obstacle to internalizing values and knowledge”.

DS4 argued: "We often receive reports from community members that our alumni who have become workers tend to be individualistic and do not show a concern to their social environment. We are not able to give explanation in detail to the community that the material available is indeed not proportional. So it is difficult to teach social ethics in the classroom. Moreover, the learning atmosphere that is built in vocational schools is indeed individualistic and based on reward and punishment system. We train the students to be discipline in the preparation for joining working world ".

DS2 reinforced the opinions of DS1, DS3, DS4: "social ethics aspects have repeatedly been proposed as mandatory teaching subjects and had its proportion be added. However, over the past three years the idea has not been realized, so there has not been a fundamental change in society. In addition, social ethics is actually one of the keys to stem the influence of capitalism in the context of individuals as the work culture in industry tends to emphasize on the ability of individuals, making it very difficult to dismantle the bad habits. But, I still hold the principle that social ethics must continue to be taught in vocational schools. Teachers must be creative in applying social ethics in the classroom so that we are able to equip students of good values in society. Therefore, after graduation they do not become asocial; become a person with a great social mind instead."

4. DISCUSSION

Indonesia is a country that is experiencing a nationalism crisis. Fostering nationalism through education has stalled and experienced a setback in terms of material, especially in vocational education that often ignores aspects of nationalism as an important part of education. This research supports the opinion of Kumar and Hill that capitalism has changed the orientation of society towards materialistic preference. This can be proven by taking a look at the curriculum framework on vocational education that directs students to think like workers or laborers; they are prepared to serve corporations, not the state. Capitalism has killed humanism in education. To capitalism, certain aspects such as nationalism and patriotism are nuisances, so they need to be minimized for the sake of its development. For a long time, according to Peters and Bulut, capitalism and its supporters do not want nationalism to flourish in developing countries, because the growth of nationalism as had happened in Cuba, Indonesia in the Soekarno era, Vietnam, and North Korea had hampered the pace of capitalism development. Therefore, nationalism needs to be narrowed, while internationalism and globalism are strengthened (Kumar & Hill, 2012; Peters & Bulut, 2011). In the practice of vocational education, nationalism cannot develop because vocational education in Indonesia is still oriented towards output quantity rather than quality. This is in line with the findings of Slaughter and Leslie

that capitalism has currently damaged parts of the world education system. Capitalism has succeeded in turning people in third world countries into workers who are demanded to have high competence as they are making profits from community work. Capitalism is now even more advanced as they infiltrate the world of education by playing their role in the curriculum (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). The result is the bad state of Indonesia's vocational education. The loss of nationalism content in vocational education has strengthened the position of capital and industry in Indonesia, while the development of the country in the name of nationalism has increasingly been marginalized; as viewed from the perspective of a teacher.

This research supports the opinion of Freire that in third world countries, vocational education is a tool for capitalist to prepare its corporate instruments (Freire, 2018). Vocational education does not recognize critical pedagogy, considering that students are required to do practicum and laboratory work. In addition, the portion of social-humanities subjects is very limited that the teacher is unable to be creative due to limited time. Teachers are required to complete the material within the specified time. However, the homework system is now no longer known in the education curriculum in Indonesia, so that teachers of social-humanities feel that their roles have been marginalized. Related to this this phenomenon, Allman explained that education system which had been co-opted with the interests of capitalism would neglect critical education. Workers who are prepared in school should not have critical awareness as citizens. They are not allowed to demand their rights to corporations as companies prefer workers who are obedient than workers who are critical of their rights and responsibilities (Allman, 2019). Critical education is a nightmare for capitalism that causes the practice of deviating from the corporation who does not want to be controlled and confronted with protests. The corporation wants a conducive and well-organized situation to run their business. This research supports Gokhale's opinion that critical education can develop students' awareness of rights and responsibilities to the state and institutions. Critical education is not only a medium for guiding the protest movement, but also an effort to foster citizens who are aware of the role they play in society. Teachers have an important role in supporting said awareness process. Therefore, critical education must be carried out on the basis of shared awareness about the importance of enlightenment in education (Gokhale, 2012).

In the finding of this research, nationalism and critical education are instruments to create an ideal vocational education. Since the current condition of vocational education is very conventional and subject to the interests of capitalism, it needs to be criticized to pave way for new ideas about ideal vocational education. Current vocational education has triggered deviations in the attitudes of Indonesia workers. Cases of Indonesian workers who do not want to return to Indonesia after serving for overseas companies are factual evaluation materials for improving vocational education in Indonesia. In addition to the problem of nationalism and way of thinking, vocational education also experiences problems in the process of forming students' social ethics. Teachers often get complaints about the attitude of vocational school alumni who tend to be individualistic and not sensitive to the environment. This is the impact of the capitalism influence in the vocational education curriculum in

Indonesia. This confirms that this research supports the argument of Newhouse and Suryadarma that vocational education, although it mainly use practical methods and laboratory work, in principle is similar to education in general that in addition to developing cognitive and psychomotor aspects, vocational education also needs to develop affective competence as it is intended to grow awareness and concern of students to their social environment. Playing role as workers and entrepreneurs who are loyal to the country, they are also part of the community who need to be involved in social work in their environment (Newhouse & Suryadarma, 2011). This is where the importance of social ethics content in the vocational education curriculum of social-humanities subjects is. Inputs from various parties are needed and important for the idealization of vocational education in Indonesia.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Indonesia's vocational education has been co-opted by the interests of global capitalism. The education curriculum is designed to produce skilled workers to meet the needs of companies. Nationalism aspects for teachers are very important for vocational education as it can shape the character of students to ensure that they will remain loyal to their country even after they graduate. Nationalism, according to teachers, is an idea that must be instilled in students from the first time they enter vocational school to ensure that they know that their purposes also involve supporting the development of the nation-state. Critical education is an approach that must be used by social-humanities subject teachers in vocational schools. A critical approach can be a tool to trigger students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities as workers and as citizens. Critical awareness is the initial step for students in acting their lives as workers and entrepreneurs who are loyal to the country. For teachers, individualism is a very dangerous virus for the social life of vocational school graduate students. The teacher emphasizes the importance of social ethics to shape the students' character to work professionally and adhere to social norms in society. Students must be taught about care in vocational schools, so that they can adapt and be fully accepted by the community. Thus, the vocational education curriculum needs to be evaluated in order to achieve the ideal form and in accordance with the goals and ideals of the Indonesian state.

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