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INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON PRIMARY EDUCATION (ISPE)  
PGSD and PGSDAS Study Programs

**EMPOWERING  
THE PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR  
THE BRIGHTER GENERATION**  
*PROCEEDING*



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## DEVELOPING CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE POLICY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION DECENTRALIZATION

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### Abstract

The policy of decentralized education has not succeeded to overcome the education problem in primary school. The government's policy on primary education of compulsory education is not automatically overcome the problem of primary education; it requires critical analysis toward the process of the implementation of the education policy in the operational structure due to the structural and cultural obstacles.

Building the culture competence becomes an important prerequisite in managing the primary education's problem in Indonesia, both structural and cultural dimension. Culture competence turns into main element in shaping democratic learning community. Therefore, we need to build culture competence power in all area by developing: a) the acquisition of knowledge, b) the critical power, c) the ability to develop knowledge, d) practical skills developed in the level of family, school and community as a moral movement to build a culture of school awareness.

Key word : cultural competence, primary education

### 1. Introduction

The development of education in Indonesia still faces complex issues. This complexity is related to two major problems, i.e. structural problem and cultural problem. The structural and cultural approach become important aspects in understanding the social dynamics of education policy, thus, the understanding of education problems is not partial and pragmatic, but describes a dynamic and comprehensive understanding of education management. In this case, it requires analysis of process related to structural and cultural dimension of education. In the structural dimension, the ongoing social dynamics in a decentralized education policy is related to the role system of education unit as well as primary education system. In the cultural dimension, the social dynamics is related to social interaction process of the elements of education unit system or larger in primary education system (Diwingrum, 2011).

The problem of primary education development in Indonesia is quite complex. Two main problems of primary education in Indonesia are the equity problem and opportunity for the children at elementary age has not been optimally realized. The statistic data show that the number of the school age children who do not go to school has not decreased; even the number of drop out students is not reduced. Sociologically, this social phenomenon is proved by the fact that we can easily find many school age children who are working, becoming beggar and wandering in the street. This phenomena is strengthen by the structure of Indonesian society which still portrays the existence of a relatively sharp social gap between social classes in the society, therefore the

opportunity for education as one form of government's education policy has not been responded optimally by the society. As the result, the effort of the government policy on the nine-year compulsory education has not been successfully realized.

The number of the drop out students from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) data show that every year more than 1.5 million children cannot continue their education into higher level. One of the treatments offered by MoEC to reduce the number of the school dropout children is to fix the mechanism of the School Operational Aid/Bantuan Operasional Sekolah (BOS) and Bantuan Siswa Miskin (BSM). Nowadays, it is recorded that there are eight millions students receive the BSM, with the total budget of 4 millions rupiahs for primary school students to high school/vocational school students. However, there are still many primary school students drop out from school, or not continuing their study to higher level of education. Meanwhile, reported by Koran Pendidikan, the BSM unit price is increasing with various percentages. The percentage of the aid for each level are as follow: 12,9% to 35.7% for primary school; 14.2% to 29.5 % for junior high school, 12.3% to 16.9% for high school, 15.5% to 19.0% for vocational high school and for Bidik Misi scholarship it increase up to 12.000 students. This empiric data show that problem exists in the development and that the government has made efforts to overcome it although the result is not optimal. The problems of school in each level prove that the development of primary education still face difficulty. (<http://topik-utama.koranpendidikan.com/view/3298/putus-sekolah-jamin-beasiswa.html>)



The actualization of compulsory education policy is one of the attempts to respond the global issue related to 'education for all'. However, the implementation of the compulsory education policy still faces two main problems, namely structural and cultural problems. Structurally, primary education already has a strong law foundation i.e. Indonesian Government Regulation Number 28 of 1990 on Primary Education which mainly explains that as the implementation of the provisions of Article 13 of Law No. 2 of 1989 on National Education System that it is necessary to set the terms, conditions and procedures for the way of establishment, unit form, duration of the education, and the implementation of primary education based on government regulation. Herein after referred as:

- a. Primary education is general education with duration of nine years, six years in primary school, and three years in junior high school or equivalent.
- b. Primary school is a form of primary education unit that provide six years program.
- c. Junior high school is a form of education unit that provide three years program.
- d. Student is the education participant in the educational unit of primary school education level in the school education line.
- e. Parents are father and/or mother or guardian of the student.
- f. Ministry is ministry who are responsible for the national education issue.

Based on an understanding of the policy content, it can be assumed that the government policy on primary education did not automatically solve the problem of primary education, but still required a critical analysis toward education policy implementation process in the operational order. It means that the interpretation of the policy is not merely normative, but the implementation has to be analyzed by paying attention on the dimension of program, process, and its evaluation. The policy of compulsory education is not enough to be regulated by law, what should also be considered is the readiness of the human resources who are capable in managing the primary education professionally. On the other side, the process to build awareness of compulsory education to the society needs an understanding on the socialization process.

Education policy has to be understood as a process. Education is a process that in the micro-perspective the center of the attention is the students in the learning process. Students in the learning process are related to the aim of education, methodology, and learning result evaluation. In this perspective, education system acts as executive of the power of the state (Tilaar, 2003:151). While in the macro-perspective, it is understood in the cultural study perspective. In this context, education system is integrated part of the system of cultural, social, political, and economic as a whole. In the

relation to inter-state, education is a system which is integrated with the power system. The strength of this perspective is that the education system can change the way of society life because it changes one's behavior to be open minded and reflective. Critical pedagogy is the pioneer in using the view of cultural study. The role of the country in this perspective can be positive if the education institutions have control toward the state power (Tilaar, 2003:151). Based on this analysis, education in a decentralized policy has not succeeded in creating opportunity and equity of education optimally because of some structural and cultural obstacles in both micro and macro level. The effort to overcome the structural and cultural obstacle is determined by the success in implementing the policy principles and the aim of education policy, both in macro and micro level. To understand this problem, this paper will try to discuss two main topics, i.e. how is the principal concept of primary education decentralization, and how is the culture competence becomes an important prerequisite in managing the primary education's problem in Indonesia,

## 2. Discussion

The change of decentralized education policy is filled with hope for a better development of education. Centralized education has not succeeded to optimize the role of education as a moral power of the nation, even the slogan of "Knowledge is Power" is still far from reality. Meanwhile, the world slogan on the education right namely "Education for All" is still out of reach, it is still become concept. Centralistic approach tends to shut down principles of democracy (Tilaar, 1998 in Dwiningrum, 2011). Furthermore, centralized education weakens the society participation and narrowing the space for educators. This kind of process omits the society potential to create a critical community toward the situation of education. As the result, education institution has fewer roles in public space, for the growth of democracy. A deeper impact of the education hegemony is the weakening of local education and local culture. As the result, local society undergo anomaly, alienation, losing identity, and losing their "bhineka"/togetherness in diversity spirit (Makmuri, 2003:5).

The application of decentralization concept is not easily realized. Decentralization is not an easy concept to define, because this concept has many shape and dimension. Rondineli (1986) as cited by Teguh Yuwono defines decentralization as a transfer of responsibility in planning, management, and allocation of the resources from central government and its agents to the ministry unit, unit under government level, semi-otonomus public authority or corporation, regional or fungsional authority in wide area, or private non government

organization and non profit organization. Meanwhile, Shahid Javed Burki, as cited by Teguh Yuwono uses the term decentralization to show the process of transfer of political, fiscal, and administrative power to subnational government unit (Teguh Yuwono, 2003:27-28 in Diwiningrum 2010).

The analysis shows that applying decentralized policy needs huge social support and participation of the society as explained by Smith, Turner dan Hulme, cited by Teguh Yowono (2003, 37-38) , it consists of: political education, political leadership training, political stability, political equality, accountability, and government response. Those supports are needed in responding primary school policy, because with them the profit and benefit will be felt by society. The successful implementation of decentralization of primary education will provide enormous benefits to solve the problem of equity and primary education opportunity. As explained by Turner that there are several benefits of decentralization (cited by Diwiningrum, 2011:8). If it is analyzed from the benefit of decentralization of primary education, the application of primary education policy needs several comprehensive ideas, therefore the result will be able to solve primary education problem more optimally, as follows:

- a. Plan more specifically the primary education program based on the latest information from the condition of school age children who need primary education to meet the need at local level, thus it requires locally specific plan;
- b. Organize primary education institution in regional level intensively to map the number of school age children which more focus on the real condition of the society, thus, it needs *inter-organizational coordination*;
- c. Design improvement of the primary education process by providing bigger opportunity to all school age children to attend school by developing innovative strategy with socio cultural approach to the society, so that the number of the school age children who do not attend school can be reduced in every region, thus, it needs some alternative program (*experimentation and innovation*);.
- d. Motivate all elements of the society to have responsibility to complete the compulsory education as a moral and social movement by creating culture of school awareness program, thus it needs socialization with various communicative media (*motivation of field-level personnel*);
- e. Reduce the work load at every government level by creating clear work mapping according to the condition of each region, therefore the improvement of primary education quality program can be decided based on the need of the society which is designed to be more

focused and realistic, thus it needs work load mapping and performance of primary education institution (*workload reduction*).

By understanding the benefit of the decentralized policy of education above, it is expected that decentralized education is not merely to support political agenda, but as an attempt to bring back people's right for education. In addition, the practice of primary education still refers to effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of the public. From the cultural view, decentralization of education needs to pay attention to the specialty; uniqueness of local area, such as geography, residents' condition, economy, culture, therefore the development of decentralization can expedite the formulation and implementation of the program to improve public welfare. If it is seen from the central government agenda, decentralization is expected to overcome the central government's weaknesses in controlling the programs (Dwiyanto, 2005:49-50). Based on those reasons, decentralization is necessary to streamline education policy.

In social life, policy of decentralization requires social capital power to be realized according to its law power. In this context, the application of decentralization of education in Indonesia is strengthened by the Law 22, 1999 which emphasizes that the biggest authority for education sector from pre-school up to high school belongs to local/city government. Law 20, 2003 on National Education System concerning parents' obligation to provide basic education for their children (Article 7, paragraph 2) strengthens this law. Furthermore, the obligation of the society is to provide resource support in the education implementation (par.9). Similarly, the education fund becomes a shared responsibility of central government, local government, and society (article 46 par. 1). In this context, education in the local level actually provide sufficient basis to be more empowered, to be more functional, to have high flexibility, not only end up as a rhetorical topic. Therefore, the commitment of the major as chief of the district toward education will influence the region.

The implementation of decentralization of education requires education capital power in the local level. Decentralized policy of education that changes several rules and regulations shows that different units between the central government and school are as not only mediator/agent or transmitter but it needs to be expanded as making operational policy and school policy. In relation with this change, units in region and city need to develop social capacity in formulating operational policy and policy under its authority. One of the important education capital elements is social capital.

Social capital determines the success of primary education. Since until today not all areas in

Indonesia are capable in moving social capacity in their place to support the policy of primary education. The failure of the implementation of decentralized policy of primary education tends to be caused by several factors:

- a. There is not yet available strong awareness from all personal involved in the management of primary education on the benefit of decentralized policy;
- b. There is not yet available knowledge which can convince the society that the success of the education development is determined by the success of primary education;
- c. There is not yet established a partnership between school and other institution to manage the primary education in the level of educational unit;
- d. There is not yet available a guidance book made by local government to regulate the implementation of primary education which is interpreted contextually to overcome drop out problem.
- e. There is not yet any optimal involvement of the stakeholder in the primary education quality improvement in local government;
- f. There is not yet established 'learning society' that mapped on the Indonesian citizen (per local level) particularly in the age structure for primary school which in sustainably way should be built school culture and learning culture to continue the education to higher level

The source of the problems above is the weakening of social media. The need to overcome the primary education problem becomes a shared awareness, as according to the mandate of Constitution 1945 on the right to obtain proper education. However, until today decentralization of education has not yet succeeded in solving the education problems, as resulted by World Bank Team analysis that decentralization of education has something to do with education fund, efficiency improvement, and effectiveness of education efforts, political power distribution, education quality improvement, and investigation innovation improvement become a shared responsibility between central government and local government.

Primary education problem should be handled by various programs to overcome both structural and cultural problems. In this case, the culture development becomes an important foundation in overcoming primary education development, so that the structure problem can be resolved.

Structural problem is very complex. Due to high socio-economy inequity in Indonesia, it is not easy to be managed by reducing the inequity. Therefore, government needs creative and proactive strategy so that the repair of economy issue will automatically provide same opportunity for education or other alternative that by receiving high education it will automatically lead to higher income or social rank so that the education quality enhancement is realized better (Suyata, 2013). In this context, the efforts to develop 'equal and equity' structure needs longer time than the effort to fix the cultural dimension, because to change structure, it is determined by the power of culture. Therefore, to mobilize the structure improvement, cultural dimension becomes an important aspect to support the success of decentralized policy of primary education.

Building cultural competence becomes an important prerequisite to overcome the primary education problem in Indonesia. Cultural competence becomes main element in forming a democratic learning society. As explained by Zamroni (2011:35) that there are four factors that form cultural competence: a) acquisition of knowledge, b) critical power, c) skill to develop knowledge, d) practical skill. Those four factors are dynamic, not static, working relentlessly, evolving continuously, interact, and provide feedback to each other. This process of interaction have contextual characteristic, doing the process by adapting to the existing situation and condition. The process occurred produces various output, which can be used as feedback to each existing factor. To overcome the primary education problem in Indonesia those four competences should be built on family level, school level and society level. The cultural competence development in primary education can be described as follow:

**Table 1. The Cultural Competence Development in Primary Education**

Factor	Level		
	Family	School	Society
Acquisition of knowledge	Understanding the aim of studying in school to develop children's potential	Developing appropriate curricula in the socio-cultural context	Socializing the role of education in building civilized society.
Critical power	Familiarizing children to express their thought, think positively, creatively, and proactively	Integrating subjects in the learning process so that students can practice to express their thought, think positively, creatively, and proactively to answer the 'what, how, and why' question about everything they learnt (Zuchdi, 2008:123 in Siti Irene Astuti, 2011)	Building democratic culture in the life of the society and nation
ability to develop knowledge	Selecting the desired school model according to the needs of the family, family orientation to the children to be successful in learning at school.	Mobilizing the society to build school as 'key school', which is capable to be a society school model, responded by school member.	Regional's policy by developing 'key school' into capital of society education and learning center.
Practical Skill	Embedding social skill, cultural skill, and adaptation ability to the children by family	Developing social skill, special skill, soft skill based on the aim of the school and the needs of the society	Building society learning medium which is integrated with special program needed by the society.

Cultural competence should be developed with systemic and contextual approach so that the result can be maximized. Systemic approach is intended to solve primary education problem in family level but this should also be supported by a behavior change in the school and society level. The effort to conduct learning behavior assessment in the family, school, and society level should be done by local government; therefore, the program design of primary education can truly be designed according to the field data. In this case, designing 'based on data' program become government culture to respond any education policy changes, so that it will not lead to double-standard view on the result. Meanwhile, contextual approach emphasized more on the needs and socio-cultural condition of the society.

The development of cultural competence will support the success of compulsory education program if there is involvement from all member of society. One of the main elements is the role of family. It is based on the assumption that primary education problem is rooted from the failure of family in educating children to go to school, which is caused by structural and cultural condition in the family level. Thus, government concern to build school awareness in family level should be mobilized into moral movement to form school

awareness culture that continually disseminated between generations. Building "shame of no school" culture is not easy to do, if not all elements of society and school management are motivated sincerely to fight for this nation moral movement until the number of dropout students and school-age children who do not attend school with 'zero effects' in every regional area in Indonesia.

Main task of primary education manager is to build synergy between elements of central and local government to reduce the number of school age children dropout up to zero level and to encourage the children to pursue higher education. The failure in building primary education to realize compulsory education program proves failure in building the education foundation in Indonesia, which brings result to a more complex nation crisis. This means nation crisis complexity will be easily resolved if the government succeed in managing primary education problem and continue the work on education equity and quality at all society level. Placing 'primary education' as the foundation of nation power and 'education as enlightenment' as tool to overcome nation crisis should be promoted to be a moral movement.

### 3. Conclusion

From the discussion above, there are some main ideas can be inferred:

- a. Decentralized policy of primary education has not managed to overcome the education problem in primary school. Government's policy on primary education with its compulsory education policy is not automatically solve the primary education problem, but it needs critical analysis toward the process of the implementation of the education policy in the operational order, due to the structural and cultural obstacles.
- b. The structural dimension issue is very complex due to the social-economic inequality in Indonesia is relatively high, which is not easy to be solved with education gap reduction. In this context, the effort to build a structure that tends to be 'equal and equity' needs a longer time compared to the effort to manage the cultural dimension issue.
- c. Changing the structure is determined by the power of the culture which is considered as an important aspect to support the success of the decentralized policy of primary education. Building cultural competence is the important prerequisite to solve the primary education problem in Indonesia, both in structural and cultural dimension. Cultural competence becomes a main element in shaping a democratic learning society. Therefore, it is necessary to build cultural competence power in every area by developing: a) the acquisition of knowledge, b) the critical power, c) the ability to develop knowledge, d) practical skills developed in the level of family, school and community as a moral movement to build a culture of school awareness.
- d. The development of cultural competence is done by a systemic approach so that it will reach a maximum result. Systemic approach means that the effort to solve the primary education problem is not only done in the level of family, but also needs to be supported by the behavior change in the level of school and society.
- e. The implementation of compulsory education program is not only the responsibility of the government. Since the problem comes from the failure of the family in educating their children to go to school, which is caused by the structural and cultural condition in the family level. The concern from the government to build school awareness in the family should be developed to be moral movement to form the culture of the school awareness which is constantly socialized between generations.

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