PUSAT PENGEMBANGAN KURIKULUM
through the CURRICULUM CAPACITY PROJECT

August 1998

Technical Report No: 7

EDUCATION AND THE CURRICULUM

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PREFACE

This technical paper is one of a series written by staff of the Curriculum Development Centre (Puskur) of the Ministry of Education. The series is being produced under the Curriculum Capacity Project, a DfID funded project of the British Government which is located in Puskur and managed by the British Council.

The objective of the papers is to disseminate the results of work undertaken by Puskur staff to those interested in educational and curriculum issues in Indonesia. The first papers in the series are the products of training workshops held under the project for Puskur staff. These have concentrated on research into non-school users of the curriculum as well as curriculum implementation in the classroom. All have used qualitative research methodology. Later papers will include those reporting the findings of classroom observation in schools at the basic education level, as well as the outcome of curriculum evaluation. It is hoped that readers will find the contents useful and interesting, and that the series will form the basis for informed discussions between Puskur and other educational research institutions, as well as contributing to the present debate on educational issues within the country.

I would like to thank the Head of Puskur, Bp. Ibrahim Djamil, Ph.D. and Bp. Faisal Madani, the Project Manager, both of Puskur, for their on-going support for the CCP project, Mr Geoff Evans of the British Council for his encouragement, and finally the heads of division and Puskur staff themselves for contributing to the series.

Dr. EM Sweeting
(Long-Term Curriculum Advisor)

August 1998

TITLES TO DATE

1. Workshop I: Educational Concepts, Staff Working Papers

2. Upaya Penerbit Buku Pelajaran dalam Memenuhi Target Kurikulum
Etty Sisdiana, Heru Setyono, Hudoyo dan Kurniawan

3. Pemahaman Penulis Buku Teks Terhadap Kurikulum Bahasa Indonesia SD 1994,
Ambari Sutardi, Sudiyono, Sutjipto dan Ariantoni

4. Penelitian Kualitatif Penggunaan Kurikulum dalan Kegiatan MGMP,
Lambas, M. Slamet, Slamet Wibowo dan Elly Marwati

5. Laporan Penelitian Penulisan Tes Caturwulan,
Maskur, Julius J., Jarwadi dan A. Hamid

6. Pemanfaatan Kurikulum Sekolah dalam Menyusun Program di Penataran Guru (BPG),
Noor Indrastuti, Neneng Kadariyah, Tatang Subagyo dan Lili Nurlaili

7. Education and the Curriculum,
EM Sweeting

Education and the Curriculum

What is education?

Most people consider education to be the process of learning something which is often considered by the wider society to be valuable. The objective is to master knowledge or develop skills of some kind. To this end, learning can be pursued for its own sake, out of curiosity and to stretch the mind, or it can be for some later instrumental purpose. Both are equally valid as learning.

Often education is contrasted with training, especially in England where the word "teach" is associated with education, while training is associated with "instruct" (Lawton, 1988). The former is seen as having a higher status than training and as somehow being a more worthwhile pursuit. While education is concerned with such high level activities as analysis, evaluation, synthesis (Bloom, 1956), training on the other hand is concerned with the development of specific practical skill(s). During training, there is a clear set of criteria against which the trainee can be assessed. That is, there is only one correct way to perform the task and to display mastery of the required skill. Education in contrast, is open to debate over its aims and the methods used to achieve them. It is also less straightforward to assess whether education has taken place.

Many educational processes which society judges worthwhile for its younger generation to pass through are in fact training tasks. The skills which primary school children need to master basic literacy and numeracy are developed through a series of training. For example, there is a correct way to write, and a correct way to pronounce words in a language so that meaningful communication is possible. Repetition and frequent practice with reward and correction are necessary to produce a literate individual. Once the basic skills have been inculcated, the learner can progress to higher things of a more educative nature.

Education, school and ideology

In most countries, a single institution is accorded the major responsibility for education. Children are taken, by law, from the security of the family at the age of five or six and placed in a school under the guidance of teachers (education specialists) and a

curriculum is followed. The curriculum has generally been developed by another group of specialists. These are sometimes but often not practicing teachers and parents. Education has tended to become equated with the place known as school in almost everyone's mind. Furthermore, the perceived educational value of the school overrides the learning which had already taken place in the family and immediate community of the young child where language, moral and religious values were first developed. The importance of this informal education, acquired through being a member of a wider society and culture, tends to be negated for the most part even though it continues during a child's school career and throughout life. Where does the power of the school and its curriculum originate from?

As education is equated with school, and the socialization of children into a society's cultural norms and values is a dominant activity in any school system, education is not value free. Education and the curriculum must therefore be seen within the broader political context. How the curriculum is planned and what is taught in school depends for the most part on the dominant ideology adopted by the society for which the curriculum was devised. A number of educational ideologies can be identified in the literature, discerned in curriculum documents, and observed in school and classroom activities.

There is agreement within English speaking areas that there are three major educational ideologies (Skilbeck, 1976; Tanner and Tanner, 1980). These can be said to follow the general political pattern of right, left and centre in terms of ideological views. The oldest traditional ideology, termed classical humanism by Skilbeck (1976), stresses academic learning and is subject-based. While possibly being appropriate in the past when education was only for a minority, in the era of mass education it is not. It fails to take into account the fact that other forms of knowledge other than the second-hand book knowledge of prescribed subjects are of equal worth (Eraut, 1996), and that not all children are suited to the purely academic learning experience. It has been analyzed as elitist, emphasizing unequal access, demanding conformity and passivity from the learner with the teacher as the transmitter of information (Morrison and Ridley, 1989).

In contrast, Skilbeck's (1976) progressive ideology is at the other extreme of the spectrum. It developed in reaction to classical humanism. Froebel turned Rousseau's original

ideas of a child-centred approach to learning into an educational programme while Piaget refined the ideas (Lawton, 1989). In this ideology, the child is active and there is an emphasis on developing skills and processes within integrated subjects. The teacher takes the role of guide and facilitator and the learning experience is empirical and diverse (Morrison and Ridley, 1989) with children developing their own special capabilities at their own pace.

The midway ideology, termed reconstructionism by Skilbeck (1976), takes the best of the other two ideologies while also developing a new one. John Dewey is often associated with this view of education as a way of improving society. Social values are stressed for developing cooperation and good citizenship. Knowledge is "justified in terms of social need, not in terms of custom, nor cultural heritage" (Lawton, 19989:6). The ideology emphasizes problem solving, cooperation and active learning with the teacher as a guide or catalyst for social changes (Morrison and Ridley, 1989).

Two other distinct ideologies exist within this continuum of ideas. Liberal humanism advocates equal access to areas of experience for all children. Learning is cooperative and active with the teacher as guide or facilitator (Morrison and Ridley, 1989). Technocratism, powerful in the USA but less so in Europe, is utilitarian and economically relevant. It is based on the behavioural objectives of Bobbitt (1918). Tyler's (1949) statements about objectives was a less extreme version of this ideology. Outcomes-based learning and minimum learning competencies are more recent manifestations of this same ideology.

Education and curriculum

These ideologies have been grouped into three by Kelly (1989) as they relate to planning the school curriculum. Education as classical humanism, based on the transmission of a restricted sample of the knowledge, culture and values of a society, has knowledge-content as the basis for curriculum planning. The instrumental educational ideology of technocratism translates into a curriculum which stresses the end product of education. Planners following this ideology explicitly state their aims and objectives, often in overly minute detail. Finally, those who view education as development of the learner are concerned with the processes which they feel education can promote, selecting content because of its likely contribution to developing the learner.

Curriculum planning is necessarily a contest between education professionals and politicians for control over the socialization of the younger generation into society's cultural norms and values. Major questions for any society include: "Whose norms and values are selected as the basis for the curriculum?" and "Who makes the selection?". Sociologists of education have noted that the norms and values most often chosen are those of the ruling elite of a country. This has led several major international figures such as Paulo Freire (1972) and Illich (1971) to press for societies to be 'de-schooled' so that "young citizens should not be subjected to a process of socialization, or even indoctrination, by those in power" (Kelly, 1989:146). Weingartner and Postman (1969) have argued for an approach to education which is "planned ... to encourage pupils to challenge the values implicit in the curriculum which is imposed upon them by the dominant group or ideology" (Kelly, 1989:149).

The curriculum dominates the activities of the school, whether through the planned, explicit curriculum, or through those unplanned and less obvious activities which occur within the classroom and school, the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum encompass many aspects including the teacher, teaching learning methods used, examination and testing system, and textbooks and other resources. The influence of these factors on pupils, parents and wider society are often far stronger than the stated curriculum. Meaning is generally discerned through action rather than being stated verbally. The former is always more powerful.

Usually, people are not aware of the consequences of the messages of the hidden curriculum on their behaviour. For example, the format chosen for assessment has a powerful backwash effect on what is considered important by pupils, parents and teachers and heavily influences the taught curriculum. In countries where the multiple-choice format is emphasized for all tests and exams, children do not need to be able to write fluently, coherently and logically in exams. As a consequence, developing children's writing skills is of minor importance for teachers (Sweeting, 1997). Nor are people aware of their own contribution to the hidden curriculum. For instance, research has shown that negative teacher attitudes and poor teacher expectations of certain groups of pupils such as those from lower socio-economic backgrounds or different ethnic groups influence the achievements of these children. Finally, the strong influence of the materials and resources teachers choose to use

also goes unnoticed, such as the hidden messages communicated by writers through school textbooks (Sweeting, 1997).

A Final Note

The importance attached to education by the wider society including employers, also influences the actions of pupils, parents and teachers. If teachers and society stress passing tests and exams over developing skills then the state of being schooled without being educated can arise. Dore (1997) reminds us that pupils are influenced not only by **what** was learnt and **how** it was learnt in school, but of equal importance is **why** something was learnt. Thus, we can distinguish between "schooling which is education, and schooling which is only qualification" (Dore, 1997:8). In the former, pupils learn to master knowledge or skills that they can repeatedly use in later life. The circumstances of the latter, however are that the actual qualification itself is the major purpose of the enterprise. That is, being certified as having mastered something is the main objective. This is an extreme instrumental view of education but one which dominates in most societies. Education and the resulting qualifications become one means of distributing scarce resources among a growing population.

Implications for Indonesian Education

The above discussion has highlighted some of the complexities of education and curriculum. During and beyond this period of "Reformasi", Indonesia has the chance to rethink its ideological position in relation to education. In order to avoid the potential problem of dissent over "which" ideology is chosen and "who" chooses it, MOEC needs to consult widely with the many stakeholders within society regarding the most acceptable one for the country to adopt to meet the needs of the majority of the people. A pertinent part of this process would be discussions focusing on the aims of education for Indonesia: Should it be, in the main, for human resource development leading to employment and greater economic development? Should it aim to produce an elite class? Should it be an entitlement for all children so that they can develop to their full potential?

The resultant curriculum then needs careful planning, bearing in mind not only the chosen aims and ideology, but also the capability of the majority of teachers who will

implement it and the resources available to support them. Moreover, the potential danger of the hidden curriculum, in all its disguises, needs to be made explicit, those involved directly and indirectly in delivering education - the teachers, exam, and textbook developers, among others - but also to all the stakeholders, not least to older pupils and their parents.

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