

How Worth Education Is: A Case Of Faculty Of Education, Universitas Terbuka

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Abstract

There are indeed many notable and to some extent very reasonable doubt as to the worth of education. That education is only a waiting room where all around it gets transformed or revolutionize. And that is in global and local level. This paper argued contrariwise or at least showing that education is worth taking effort to make a person or nation to be smarter and wise ('cerdas'). The methodological views of this paper is that of Habermasian critical theory 'to study the world in order to change it'. However, this paper is basically 'a quite advanced islamic-Nietzschean study' in the hope that in the not so far future, its results could be implemented in real life. In Islamic-Nietzschean perspective, it is not knowledge or education if it cannot lead to action. That it is now time for knowledgeable action, for praxis. Phenix-Adler-Islamic view show what praxis it could be. On the ways to it, the three levels of Hamilton-Habermasian is recited, while Illich classic 'deschooling society' is also noted.

Keywords: the worth of education, Faculty of Education Universitas Terbuka, Phenix-Adler-Islamic perspective

INTRODUCTION

It is very much true that in the ruin of World War2, teachers are the first professional needed by the whole society to rebuild a new Japan. However, this fact hardly qualify education is everything in a life a nation. Neither it is for the life of a person.

Education is also not a resting place where the all world surrounding it transforms and revolutionize everything. This is so even though simple and gross observation seem to give some clue on it: it is quite almost certain that people from time to time is getting more and more smart, one generation tend to be smarter than the last. Could this fact (solely) be accounted as due to more and more advanced education? No body seem to be

certain about it. How much for example that impact is due to better consumption of food? That this very fact is similar to the fact that today people get healthier than ever not due to the advancement of medical science, but may be - similarly with education or smarter people case- due to better food consumed?

Neither is the fact that there is no World War 3 (yet?) is due to people getting smarter then before or education is getting more and more advanced education? For, when it comes to war, welfare would predominate people concerns and hardly related to people get smarter nor to higher education (HE) they get?

Would then education relate not so much with how people is getting smarter? Neither would it be the most effective road to rebuild, transform

and revolutionize our world? That transformation and revolution has been always happen in some other worlds, but educational world? That education is only a waiting room where all around it gets changed, slowly or otherwise. Neither is education having to do with how (well) people get wiser? That education is getting more advanced due to the fact that there are money or resource available and people need to spend their getting a lot of leisure time to be preoccupied with something? That education is getting more suspected as simply wasting money for nothing?

Thus, our problem now is not so much on how we assess the educational achievement of a person, a people. That more important is firstly to be clear what is exactly the role of education in our life? Or, in other words, we could only fairly assess educational achievement when and only when we are clear about the function and effect of education to us?

THE PURPOSE AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Despite of all the background mentioned in the introduction, what is the proper ways for us to see what education is for and how to assess it? Especially in the context of Faculty of Education, Universitas Terbuka (FE-UT). The practice of FE-UT in the backdrop of Wittgensteinian Language Games (WLG) of idealism and realism has been expressed in Sukmayadi (2020). The views expressed in that paper need to be further scrutinized as well as to be put in some other broader perspectives. This paper is in that direction, while its broader perspective is introduced already the previous section.

The methodological views of this paper is that of Habermasian critical theory 'to study the world in order to change it'. This paper is basically 'a study' in the hope that in the not so far future, its results could be implemented in real life. As 'a study' –not for example an advocation, let alone a provocation to change, this paper might be qualified as a reflection –or at most a reconstruction- of a situation from a participant observer position. With reflection or reconstruction, there isn't then any elaboration, for example, of who

win or lose in that situation, as proper critical theory require. The situation studied is that UT or more specifically FE-UT in the last two or three decades ago. Lastly, lest it isn't be noted, all of the views expressed in this paper is not necessarily the same with UT or FE-UT formal views.

THE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is of such well-conditioned environment that the practice in FE-UT or UT in general has been shifted from content-based education. That the shift to competency based has been appropriate is open to question, for the better shift should perhaps to outcome-based education. It is now to see if this shift is indeed strategic.

Content vs Outcome-based Education

One of the best and comprehensive expression of content based education is the six Phenix realms of meaning. In Phenix words, the six realms is not the outline of modern knowledge, but the patterns of knowledge for pedagogical purposes. The Phenix realms of meaning intent to make learners to be well-versed in empirical, symbolical, and esthetical realm of meaning, along with its ethical, synoptical, and sinoetical (selfhood) realms of meaning. When he says it is not the outline of modern knowledge, he is basically not exactly fit with content based education. He says it is not content for teaching, but suggestions for its selection, it is not final but a theory of curriculum. Thus, his patterns of knowledge seem cannot escape from –or at least qualifies as some variant of- content based education ie. In the form –in his own words- of the ways professional (inquiry) proceed in their own fields of study, or of perspective or modes of thinking, horizon or methods, of certain discipline. Not to mention is his statement that it is for pedagogical purposes, when our time now need more andragogical or even heutagogical (self-paced) approach to education. The latter is especially important in the context of FE-UT which utilize open and distance education mode. Neither this Phenix approach to curriculum can be said to be flexible to personalized curriculum, the likely trend in the future. Especially when considering the latest policy of the Indonesian ministry of education

concerning 'free campus'. His approach is one size fits all. Thus, similarly learner achievement would be based on a certain one kind of assessment that is supposed to fit all. And, it is likely on how learner internalize and practice how professional works in all realms of meaning. It is unimaginable how learner creativity, for example, could otherwise be assessed. Neither is imaginable how his curriculum could be localized or contextualized to certain local characteristics.

These constraints can -some extent at least- be ameliorated by other still somewhat substantive content based approach to education which refers to the six great ideas of Adler. His first three great ideas -named ideas we judge by- are truth, beauty and goodness. To his first two ideas can be fairly included all the six Phenix realms of meaning ie. empiric, symbolic, synoptic and ethics realms of meaning can be included in truth, while esthetic and sinoetic realms of meaning to beauty. It is in this sense that Adlerian based curriculum can be said as belong content based approach. It is in this way as well that Adlerian approach could ameliorate some constraints mentioned. This is through his remaining four great ideas. Through the idea of goodness for example, education is getting more enriched. Even richer is through his remaining three great ideas, named ideas we act on: liberty, equality and justice.

This shows that Adler based education is more comprehensive than Phenix based education. It is as well simpler for it rests on six great ideas, instead of six realms of meaning each of which consists of more than one study discipline (perhaps except that of sinoetic or ethics). Not to mention is -as the name of ideas suggest, ideas we act on, together with the idea of goodness- it gives us measures of how well (the performance of) our education is. Not to mention is Adler claim which we cannot but agree that his three ideas of 'we judge by' (truth, beauty, and goodness) Is the classic concerns ever since humanity have some senses of wisdom. And we cannot agree more that his three other ideas of 'we act on' is derived from the moment when humanity wisdom is put to test in French Revolution: the test whether humanity could be built a new, to rethink its foundation, if liberty, equality and fraternity could inspire humanity to

build the dream society so long denied. Adler concisely replace fraternity with justice for in fraternity -if it is for the sake for fraternity alone- justice is lame and blind, if there is justice at all. From Adler with at last could understand if Islamic foundation of education is the most comprehensive -not only content based but also outcome based- education. For islam is based on the history of humanity itself, ever since Adam and Eve live. Its five pillar of syahadah, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and hajj is like the base of HMM mentioned in Sukmayadi (2020), its six foundational belief (ie. belief in God, angels, holy books, prophets, judgement days and in qada-qadar) is like its superstructure. All of Islamic terms is down to earth that all humanity cannot but easily understand it. And if fraternity is to be resurrected, then it would be no problem for it now for the sake of the like of HMM base and superstructure. For its outcome is rahmatan lil alamin (salvation and welfare in and for our universe, seen or unseen).

The Possible Steps

Having superstructure (theoretical perspective) elaborated in the previous section, it is now to see its base, practical implication, in especially FE-UT. As part of religious Indonesian society, FE-UT has in its curricular contents traces of Phenix-Adler and Islamic notion, though not in its explicit statements. The 'traces' also to show that it can -or even need- not to be fully Phenix-Adler-Islamic based. For the obvious reason, for example, that FE-UT is for the whole Indonesia, while the whole Indonesia acknowledge five other religions, besides islam. But, it can be fully Phenix-Adler-religious based. Several of its explicit statement for example can be traced further back to its basic foundation in the so-called preamble to Indonesian constitution or to the diehard discourse of the whole person ('manusia seutuhnya').

It should be acknowledged, however, that it is still difficult to ascertain the degree to which education in FE-UT is in accord with Phenix-Adler-religious based education. At most for the moments, it is Adler approach is the most appropriate to elaborate the latter. For sure, religion is expressed -in all study program in FE-

UT- only in one course. The students freely choose which religion to embrace. This idea of freedom or liberty is currently being enlarged and formalized –through the policy named ‘free campus’ mentioned earlier- with the students able to take one semester in other study program in UT and take two semesters outside UT either in other HE institution or in other relevant partners, or OERs (open educational resources) provided the study program has some agreement with them or appropriate arrangement in case of OERs. This free campus ideas seem to make campus open to each other and/or to other relevant learning sources, and thus supposedly avoiding the insular and unhealthy academic inbreeding, ie. ‘to reduce the possibility of new ideas coming in from outside sources, just as genetic inbreeding reduces the possibility of new genes entering into a population’ (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/intellectual_inbreeding). Next, if this idea of free campus is an embodiment of Adlerian idea of liberty, it still needs a lot of works to see if the idea could as well embody equality, goodness, and justice. While and his ideas of beauty is similarly difficult to trace with, except in one or two courses which nurture learners’ reflectivity and thus hopefully beautify their inner. All these is in contrast with his ideas of truth might be relatively easier to elaborate. In short, all of these elaboration is remain to be seen when time and necessity needs it.

Of interests and which can be easily and readily comes to our minds is that the absence of formal statements if the whole educational practices of FE-UT is based on certain academic traditions or criteria. This means that our previous idea of trying to see the practices from Phenix-Adler-religious perspective is a brand new approach to formulate the foundation of the practice as well as to see the availability of further and next steps. This also means, understandably, that in the formal formulation of its vision and mission, FE-UT is driven more by managerial-operational perspective ie. of making better academic environments (based on whatever foundation available), making HE open to all and of making a better distance education (DE) management. The formulation on access, is, of course, in line with those formulated in UT’s level, while as well

it is translated similarly to every single study program in UT, including in FE-UT. This kind of formulation is justified somewhat when we remember that the crucial function of UT that cannot be afforded by any other single HE institution in Indonesia is provide access to HE for the burgeoning high school graduates everywhere from the remotest to the closest area to HE institution. While its formulation in making better academic environment and its management is related to understandably common perception of in-effectivity and lower academic standard of DE. People –even practitioners of DE themselves- seem to forget that one strength of UT (including FE-UT) (again that is hardly affordable –or reasonably produced- by any other HE in Indonesia at least for some good time ahead) is it has more than one thousands printed study materials (that well printed, well designed, and well planned, in its delivery methods and its management). It might be exaggerated but for Indonesia it could be like the put-to-written form of encyclopedic knowledge of the early enlightenment moments of the West history which later on lead it to its (post) modern world. Not to mention is the UT strength of having well-stationed academic and administrative staff all over Indonesia. Noted as well, how there are many UTiers, ‘volunteers’, or ‘helpers’ code-named more or less as ‘pokjar’ not only all over Indonesia but also in at least thirty five ‘pokjar’ all over the world. And academically speaking, there is a lot of course textbook, test and supplementary leaning materials as well as tutor and practicum instructor all over Indonesia oursourcely speaking hired by UT.

However, missing in the vision-missing statements is the explicit orientation to learner centered education which is the very gist of competency or outcome based education. Due to its more managerial orientation, it is understandably that the formulation is still self-institution betterment oriented.

The Next Possible Steps

Given the theoretical foundation and current practice as elaborated in previous sections, it is implausible that in the immediate future more explicit statement of FE-UT in the direction of

firmly learner centered education. In this way, it can more be in a line with what is expected from an HE institution. It can as well be benchmarked against the national goal of creating golden generation in 2045, a millennium after Indonesia declared its independence. Along the ways, its road map in the next two decades is spelled out. One next stop of which is as elaborated shortly: how well UT really get along with UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation)?

In line with the firmer statement toward learner centered education, the ways education is hopefully delivered and assessed will be improved as well. The principle one size fits all will be more transformed to delivery and assessment that is sensitive to learner need and characteristics. It is hoped that with learner centered orientation more and more learner profile in terms of their cultural and their degree of independence in (on or offline) learning could be documented and put into considerations in deciding and implementing educational policy. In this ways, every single civitas academics will in a unique ways embrace and implement his/her three dharma of HE, while each dharma is closely interrelated to each other.

Next, on top of all the previous concerns and optimism which mostly seem to be inner directed in term of offering better and better education (and its management), making UT (including FE-UT) better known by larger society is an imperative that is readily at hand. As an example, UT hymn is already a grandeur in terms of its lyrics and tunes. Yet, in its almost four decades UT offers its service all over Indonesia, the hymn has not ever been deliver in a grandeur way, at least, it has not yet been performed by prestigious national orchestra for example. It is said that in ancient China, an emperor will acknowledge and some say enhance his power through hymn specifically composed for the purpose.

Beside the hymn, the logo might as well be paid attention: if the current logo is no longer in tune with millennial generation expectations and their ideas of perfection or excellence. If the current logo of a pen writing in a book is classic and everlasting ever since immemorial time, or it is simply obsolete and old fashion already.

And even more easily visible is how iconic is one or even all UT's building, as Soekarno, the first Indonesian president, for example is closely linked with national monument. This is again inspired by Chinese legacy, 'The Forbidden City ...is a palace complex in central Beijing, China... The Forbidden City served as the home of Chinese emperors and their households and was the ceremonial and political center of the Chinese government for almost 500 years' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forbidden_City).

One prominent Indonesian scholar, who once was high officer in ministry of education, once said that the frontier building of any university should actually be the building where all study program can be freely interact with its surrounding society or more precisely with any visitors who are not yet sure which study program to take. Through the interaction, it is hoped that anyone who is not sure which study program to choose would -after the visiting the building housing all the study program- make firm decision to join a certain study program.

The idea of the frontier is seminal. That it is much worthwhile if the idea is enlarged by referring to the idea of 'forbidden city': the whole sites of a university should be like that city. Or, at least, a university should have at least one iconic building which is future oriented, a building that could make every civitas academics happy and proud. It is true at the moments that UT has its several – if not all- regional office buildings already absorbed local culture architecture. Several of which is even prominent compared to the building in its local surrounding. Yet, each of which hardly can be presented as UT icon in national level, let alone in regional or global level. If UT wish to have quality globally acknowledged, wouldn't it be easier to start with that tangible indicator called UT iconic building? And most speculative of all is that in the not so far future UT has good chances of being relocated –and thus its complex building redesigned- due to the prospect of developing airport in its current vicinity? As 'the design of the Forbidden City, from its overall layout to the smallest detail, was meticulously planned to reflect philosophical and religious principles' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forbidden_City),

how should really we (re)design ‘the forbidden civitas of UT’ (for civitas academics mean really the city’s academics)?

How worth then education is?

UNESCO is hardly related to HE, including to UT or FE-UT, but its concerns greatly in line with HE. ‘[UNESCO] aimed at contributing to the building of peace [and inclusive knowledge], the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information...[It] pursues its objectives through five major program areas: education, natural sciences, social/human sciences, culture and communication/information. It sponsors projects related to literacy, technical training, education, the advancement of science, promoting independent media and freedom of the press, preserving regional and cultural history, and promoting cultural diversity. UNESCO assists in translating and disseminating world literature, establishing international cooperation agreements to secure "World Heritage Sites" of cultural and natural importance, preserving human rights, and bridging the worldwide digital divide. It also launched and leads the Education For All movement and lifelong learning’ (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO>).

Prominent among UNESCO formulation of four pillars of education: learning to know, to be, to do and to live together. To know might be what Adler say as truth, to be is Adler’s beauty or more precisely Phenix’s sinoetic, to do is his ‘ideas we act on’ and to live together is his goodness or even his all six great ideas. It is in this way that we could now firmly said that even in the global scene we have already had already achieved some sort or at least sign of general agreements.

Given this global view, where really UT or FE-UT is in now? Could we say that UT has much similarity in its focus, programs, and sponsorships as well as its pillars of education? Albeit, of course the difference of level with UNESCO from its very beginning operate in global scene, and UT is quite similarly spread all over the world, but basically national at its core. But, that UNESCO and UT has not only focus on

global level, but mostly as well goes deep down to local level, that UT has indeed proper motto of ‘reaching the unreachable (‘by traditional method’)', that UT recently declared as ‘pagar bangsa’, fencing the national(ism)? And it is this very senses that UNESCO and UT should actually work (more closely) together?

Lest it isn’t be noted, UNESCO pillar of learning to live together could be said as being practiced, or even being the very culture of daily working in UT. As mentioned earlier, one UT strength is the availability of the many people works in UT or orchestrated by UT –administratively and/or academically speaking- all over Indonesia and in the many places all over the world. All these people is bound together, consciously or otherwise, under the pillars of ‘learning to live together’!

In summing up, with the case UT or more specifically of FE-UT, could then we say that education is indeed a worth taking effort of making a nation ever smarter ever, as is mentioned in the preamble to the Indonesia constitution, ‘mencerdaskan kehidupan bangsa’. That UT could serve as its fence? That education is indeed (still) a place where revolution –or at least transformation- could be ignited, nurtured and directed to a better future?

CONCLUSIONS

People may doubt the worth of education. The paper, hopefully, speaks for itself. The paper speaks otherwise or at least speak some worth of it. The paper hopefully has as well been talking about an ‘inclusive knowledge’ within UT or FE-UT which hopefully spread not only all over Indonesia but also all over the world. And, thus contributing to building peace to all those involved or concerned. Even in the Illich classic ‘deschooling society’, education is still worth pursued, albeit not in a ways we see a few times ago. Isn’t it the scene of education in this covid19 pandemic era is close(r) to his dream? In Hamilton-Habermasian perspective, there are three level of education: the schooling for reflective learner, the real education for those who are willing to reconstruct everything she/he has so far, and the socialization level for those who are ready to

change the world. It is for us to decide if this paper belong to which category. In islamic perspective education or knowledge is a stairways to heaven, only the misuse of it is the stairway to hell. In Islamic-Nietzschean perspective, it is not knowledge or education if it cannot lead to action. That it is now time for knowledgable action, for praxis. Phenix-Adler-Islamic view show what praxis it could be.

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