

Transforming Culture Through Education

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Abstract. Education as a system has been considered as an effective platform for cultural transmission from the older generation to the younger generation. Critical literature identified that the dominant group in society tended to use education for imposing its cultural values to the entire society. In many cases, the group is less likely to make room for other cultures and perceives others' culture as threats to its cultural hegemony. Such an approach to a certain degree will lead to cultural homogeneity that is associated with intolerance and oppression. In this keynote speech, I offer a different perspective on how education should be tailored to accommodate different cultural values and to transform society's way of life and way of thinking. This thought promotes cultural transformation that is drawn from Durkheim's three-fold of cultural values in schooling and my understanding of the current global trends in educational reform. Educators in official and pedagogic recontextualisation fields need to reconsider for introducing their students to different cultures and the values inherited from the community and global society. Regarding the trends in educational reform, my research on educational policy, that I present in this paper, has outlined the dual goals of education: cultivating local culture and preparing youth to face global competition. These two opposing goals and the three-fold of cultural values then can be the basis for educators to build a positive, inclusive culture in our community and a developed society's way of life/thinking through schooling.

Keywords: cultural values, educational policy, educators, global society, recontextualisation

1 Introduction

The literature in social science so far has identified that education is one element of culture alongside religion, political system, and values. As the smaller element of culture, education is believed to be strongly influenced by the culture in which it is embedded and infiltrated by other elements such as religion and political system. In this regard, education—including educational institutions and practices—is potentially used by the dominant group in society as a political tool for maintaining their cultural domination.

Despite the smaller element, the high expectation is given to education to shape culture, and education is even seen as a panacea for social illnesses. The introduction of character education in many different countries such as the U.S, the U.K and Indonesia, is the best example to illustrate how education is aimed at curing societal problems. With this policy, education was aimed at erasing societal problems such as corruption, the internal/racial conflict

and troubling youth trends¹². Besides, educational reforms in terms of curriculum have been made to address demands for development of the governmental system, development in a way of life and thinking, and the establishment of social justice.

As one element that is nested in culture, education is arguably challenging to shape and transform culture. At least it is time-consuming since it requires broad and serious efforts undertaken by the ruling government and society at large. The question of how education could shape and transform culture and how Indonesia's education transform culture will be the focal point of this paper. Before addressing the question, however, it is important for us to narrow our discussion on what we call as culture and what we call as education here, and to outline an understanding of how education and culture are related to each other.

2 Literature Review

Culture can be defined as a society's way of life and way of thinking³. The elements of culture such as language, religion, arts, and values consistently interact through migrations, the influence of travellers, merchants, philosophers, rulers and many more. The more dynamic the society, the faster the change in society's culture, in this case, society's ways of life and way of thinking. More importantly, education is expected to bring about change in society's culture in the 'right' direction.

Meanwhile, education has been defined by scholars differently depending on their research focus. Scholars' view on what an ideal education is also pluralistic. For example, some believe education ideal if it focuses on developing students' knowledge related to the subject taught and improving their character. Some others believe educational ideal relates to the development of critical thinking. One scholar could agree that educational ideals entail all these developments. The pluralistic of views on educational ideals offered in the literature describe its importance in society as well as showing its complexity. Education that I describe here is the one that deals with a system that redefines what formal education is. Regarding cultural change, I need to underscore that as a system within a culture, education should benefit and give a positive impact on culture.

2.1 The roles of education in society

Regarding the functions of education in society, Bernstein⁴, a sociologist of education, has termed education as "Symbolic control". This term suggests that education has been used by the ruling governments to control their human resource quality symbolically according to the standards they made. Through education, the ruling government introduces what deemed valuable and less valuable to learn at schools, what particular conduct and values they think necessary for the younger generation. In this regard, education is used by the government to attain the imagined society in the future. Their imagination of the society in the future will, in

¹ Turiel, E. *The culture of morality: Social development, context, and conflict*. 2012. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press.

² Qoyyimah, U. Inculcating character education through EFL teaching in Indonesian state schools. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 2016, 11(2), 109-126.

³ Gilmore, A. Local cultural strategies: a strategic review. *Cultural trends*, 2004. 13(3), 3-32.

⁴ Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, 1990. (Vol. 4). Sage.

turn, inform what particular cultural aspects they want to maintain and the aspect they want to alter.

As the system operated by the ruling government in a society, education has least two different functions: as cultural reproduction and as cultural transformation. As a means for cultural reproduction, education is aimed at maintaining values and norms of the dominant culture in society. Foundational sociologists in education, such as Durkheim⁵ and Pierre Bourdieu⁶ also confirmed that education serves an effective platform for cultivating the culture, including its values and norms of a society. Reproduction theorists, unfortunately, identified the unfair share-out of the benefits of education and that the dominant groups in a society moulded the content and material of education to meet their interests⁷⁸. When education is aimed at cultural reproduction, there is a tendency among dominant groups in society to use education as the institution that focuses transmitting their cultural values to the younger generation in preparation for their social participation.

Additionally, education is also supposed to be a means of cultural transformation. In this view, education, including educational institutions, educators, and school materials, count among the most effective agents of cultural change, development and transformation⁹. Rather than viewing education as a means for transferring and maintaining cultural values, contemporary scholars in this field perceive education should empower and transform society¹⁰. However, since education is one element embedded in culture and its practices being dependent upon culture, cultural transformation is always on the risk. It is challenging for education to transform culture because 'education for cultural transformation' can effectively happen if education is autonomous from the culture in which it is embedded.

2.3 Educational agencies: dilemmas between transmitting and transforming culture

Since conservative and progressive thoughts have always existed side by side in society⁷, education is fully bound with the forces and tensions between means of cultural reproduction or cultural transformation¹¹. As a consequence, the process of curriculum reform becomes a battleground between these conservative and progressive forces. The two paradigms might be competing and they might be complementary. This theory aligns with Bernstein's concept of 'recontextualisation fields' that explains how the different groups in society involved in the construction of educational policies and its implementation. The 'field' means the arena in which the different agents or groups, whether they are conservative or progressive, compete to impose their culture, including habits and values to the entire society. These groups determine the objectives and the standards of education; planning; education management system,

⁵ Durkheim, E.. *Moral education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education*.1961 New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

⁶ Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. 1990 (Vol. 4). Sage.

⁷ Akkari A, Perez S. *Educational Research in Latin America*. education policy analysis archives. 1998 Mar 30;6:7.

⁸ Apple MW. *Cultural politics and education*. Teachers College Press; 1996 Jun 15.

⁹ Meşeci Giorgetti F, Campbell C, Arslan A. *Culture and education: Looking back to culture through education*.

¹⁰ Siegel, H. *Education and cultural transmission/transformation*. Philosophical reflections on the historian's task. *Paedagogica Historica*, 1996, 32(sup1), 25-46.

¹¹ Lerner. *Reformers, Teachers, Writers: Curricular and Pedagogical Inquiries*. 2019. University Press of Colorado.

instruction modes, as well as the values to prioritise in the school curriculum¹². The agents who contest the ordering/disordering principles of a curriculum include authoritative interpreters who drive how policies are selected and understood; transactors who work to make texts into action and render actions into outcomes; and copers/defenders who are at the receiving end of the policy in classrooms¹³. In a similar vein, Bernstein classified these three agents into two: Official Recontextualisation Field (ORF) and Pedagogic recontextualisation fields (PRF). The ORF that includes authoritative interpreters and transactors is represented by the Government or the Ministry of education and local educational department. Meanwhile, defender/PRF can be identified as teachers in the classroom. In the process of recontextualisation, these agents experience dilemmas on what forces dominating, conservatism or progressive thoughts that, both tend to use education as cultural reproduction and education as cultural transformation respectively.

The question is which one more applies in many societies: Whether education as cultural reproduction or as cultural transformation? Of course, the answer is it really depends on several aspects because each context has its own story and which one is more dominating, conservative or progressive forces.

To understand how education is aimed at transmitting or transforming culture, we need to see what previous studies have identified. Previous research on the educational policy has indicated that in the level of official recontextualisation field, tensions/dilemma is evident. Most of the educational policy in many countries are marked with two opposing agendas¹⁴. Rather than considering the two forces as a choice, the educational curriculum was also considered as part of a continuum between conservative and progressive approaches¹⁵. The educational curriculum is constructed both to retain national culture and to prepare students for the nation's global competitive advantage. The former reflects education to transmitting culture as it promotes traditional values, national identity, and narration on the nation's history. The latter reflects education as cultural transformation as the nations' attempts to their participation in global economic, politic and development of science. These opposing goals have made the governments embrace not only traditional and national cultural values but also universal values in the educational curriculum.

The literature also shows that cultural reproduction is needed and favourable for a number of reasons. First and the foremost, we need to note in advance that we cannot easily judge that older culture is old fashioned and no longer useful for our society in the future. Some culture inherited from the older generation might signify universal values. Secondly, Cultural transmission from the older to the younger generation is demanded as it is an essential basis of social cohesion and stability¹⁶. Thirdly, people of the dominant group who take advantage of the cultural hegemony will attempt to use education as cultural transmission. In many cases, education is aimed at maintaining their power and status quo. Finally, newly established nations

¹² Mazur, P. Yazykova, I. Tendencies of pedagogical process development in higher engineering school of Russia, 2016.

¹³ Ball SJ, Maguire M, Braun A. How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools.; 201. Routledge

¹⁴ Yates L, Grumet MR, editors. Curriculum in today's world: Configuring knowledge, identities, work and politics. London: Routledge; 2011.

¹⁵ Collins, S. Can we tell who we are without a history war?: Australian curriculum: History in the media. *Teaching History*. 2013, 47(4), 13.

¹⁶ Kozlova, M. Schoolbook as an instrument of in-group cohesion and social integration: various strategies of intergenerational cultural transmission in the Latvian and the Polish primers and textbooks of Russian emigration in 1920s. *History of Education & Children's Literature*, 2018. 13(2).

need to transmit and cultivate a national culture for strengthening their people's national identity¹⁷.

The ideas of cultural transformation in educational policy is also indispensable and should underpin the decision making of educational change/policy. It is because the philosophical conception of education is to give positive impacts on society. To do so, education should not be seen as a residual system or institution to maintaining things as they are¹⁸, but should be a social process for social construction through developing people/individuals who live in a society.

Learning from the dual goals in the curriculum, we need to understand that education should not only be seen as a residual system or institution to maintain things as they are (Gowda, 2015) but to anticipate changes in the future. Education, therefore, should equip students with capacities to determine whether to maintain or to change particular culture, tradition and values. To do so, education should promote learners to have:

1. Intellectual freedom that is the capacity to think independently and clearly
2. Intellectual curiosity, the desire to extend the process of learning after leaving schools
3. Intellectual honesty, the disposition to reason out and arrive at a judgement without a yielding to propaganda and prejudice
4. An understanding of other values and universal values
5. Critical thinking

It is important to teach our students about multiculturalism as we are living with many different cultures around us. Knowledge of other cultures could benefit students to be more open mind and to be more inclusive. Also, an understanding of universal values is important for them for sharpening their global citizenship. There are at least three values nested in our society that include the values rooted from our family, values from our community, and the values that apply to any one in the universe. Besides, developing students think critically is crucial so that students can decide what cultural values to maintain and what values to change. Our students in the future will face a problem that might be different from the problem that we are facing now and different from the problem that we predict. Critical thinking helps them to be more confident whether they want to alter/maintain cultural values.

3. Case in Indonesia: transforming or transmitting culture

My study on educational policy and cultural values explores how the ideas of conservative cultural reproduction and progressive thought of cultural transformation contribute to Indonesia's curriculum recontextualisation. The study traced back to Indonesia's educational policies in the last two decades, starting from the 2000s. Since the educational policy is political by which different agents intend to impose their values to the entire society, my study addresses the question whether education in Indonesia is aiming at transforming or transmitting culture and what challenges it encounters in transmitting and transforming culture. More specifically,

¹⁷ Vanner C, Akseer S, Kovinthan T. Learning peace (and conflict): the role of primary learning materials in peacebuilding in post-war Afghanistan, South Sudan and Sri Lanka. *Journal of Peace Education*. 2017 Jan 2;14(1):32-53.

¹⁸ Gowda, N. S. *Learning and the learner: Insights into the processes of learning and teaching*. 2015. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.

my study seeks to understand how the different agents have used educational policy in curriculum recontextualisation by looking at how the curriculum is made and implemented in the classrooms.

3.1 Research Design

The study was undertaken in the frame of qualitative research that generated data such as fieldnote, classroom observation and document analysis. The documents were Indonesia's education Acts and policy as well as the participant teachers' lessons plan. The observation was also used for seeing how teachers recontextualise the policy in classrooms. The data then was analysed based on the themes drawn in the previous literature regarding curriculum recontextualisation, values in the curriculum, teachers' beliefs, and goals oriented in the curriculum.

3.2 Findings

3.2.1 Two contrasting Goals of transmitting and transforming culture. Education in Indonesia is fully bound with conservative and progressive thoughts. From the values instilled by the Indonesian government in the education policies, my analysis suggests that education in Indonesia is made to attain these two different goals as it imposes the national cultural values as well as universal values in the society. National values include polite, friendliness, patriotism, and nationalism. Other values such as respect, democracy, honesty, independence, social awareness, eager to learn, responsibility, environmental awareness, and supportive can be classified as both national and universal values. "Universal" here means that the values can apply to any society. The list of values instilled in Indonesia can be seen in the list below:

- | No | Values |
|----|-------------------------|
| 1 | Religiosity |
| 2 | Honesty |
| 3 | Tolerance |
| 4 | Discipline |
| 5 | Hardworking |
| 6 | Creativeness |
| 7 | Independence |
| 8 | Democratic |
| 9 | Motivation to learn |
| 10 | Patriotism |
| 11 | Nationalism |
| 12 | Supportive |
| 13 | Love to read |
| 14 | Peace-maker |
| 15 | Friendliness |
| 16 | Environmental awareness |
| 17 | Social awareness |
| 18 | Responsibility |
- Plus values relevant to the school context

Source: Indonesian Ministry of Education (Kemendiknas, 2011)

The introduction of universal values in Indonesia's character education aligns with Durkheim's argument that the goal of moral conduct extends beyond the nation-state. According to him, humankind lives in the midst of family, the nation, and the humanity, and the three social

settings represent “phases of one’s social and moral evolution, stages that prepare for, and build upon, one another” (page 74). By introducing national values and universal values, education help students developing their identity and help them to be aware of their global citizenship.

My analysis in the subjects selected also suggests that the Indonesian educational curriculum comprise the two different goals: aimed at nurturing the national culture and preparing the younger generation to participate in global competitiveness. The former can be illustrated by the Citizenship subject, national history and religion subjects, while the latter can be illustrated by the English language subject, ICT and natural science subjects. However, the debate on the proportion of the two classified subjects is always evident so that the proportion of the two types of subject experienced changes in the history of Indonesian education. For example, national history made lager proportion in the 1970s to the 1980s than its proportion in the 2000s.

3.2.2 The strong religion infiltration. Besides national and universal values, the religious value appears to be significant in Indonesia as it underpins Indonesia’s education and curriculum. It can be seen from the document of Indonesia’s Education Act, issued by the Ministry of National Education.

National Education functions to develop the capability, character, and civilization of the nation for enhancing its intellectual capacity, and is aimed at developing learners’ potentials so that they become faithful and pious to one and only God; who possess morals and noble character; who are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent; and as citizens, are democratic and responsible¹⁹

From the Act above we can see that 'religiosity' is admitted as the significant values to introduce in Indonesia's education. That is, Indonesia's education is aimed at developing students' character and potentials to become religious, and it implies that all the efforts made in the educational system are directing the students to be religious. This phenomenon also happens in other Asian countries. However, since religion has played a central role in the national identity debate, Asian countries such as Malaysia, India and Pakistan encountered complicated efforts to address the challenges of both national identity and internationalism in their educational institutions^{20 21}.

3.2.3 The gap between the values instilled in educational policy and teachers’ values. Learning from the 2003 Educational Act, the national and universal values, as well as religious values, influenced Indonesia's education in the level of policymaking. Furthermore, religiosity infiltrated the pedagogic recontextualisation field since teachers as the curriculum implementer tended to introduce their personal values of religiosity in classes rather than introducing

¹⁹ Kemendiknas. (2003). Act of the Republic Indonesia on National Education System, Number 20, 2003 C.F.R.

²⁰ Lall M, Vickers E, editors. Education as a political tool in Asia. 2009. Routledge.

²¹ Thomas, E. ‘Reverse! Now play fast forward’: Education and the politics of change in Malaysia. In Education as a political tool in Asia 2009 (pp. 134-152). Routledge.

universal values. This finding has made the conservative approach is evident in Indonesia's education.

From teachers' lesson document, I found that teachers understood how to implement the character education policy. That is, they must select three or four values out of the 18 values that comprise national and universal values. They selected different values that are suitable for the English subject that mostly introduced other values or universal values. Although the teacher participants inserted the values in their lesson plans, teachers in this study, however, tended to teach the value of religiosity in classes. In addition to teachers' tendencies, the school determined class activities that strongly reflected religious values, such as starting the day with reciting Holy Qur'an. Such tendencies can be seen from the Appendix that presents the data from observation of these classroom activities.

Teachers in Indonesia, therefore, are mostly religious conservative since they continue transmitting the values of the dominant group of the Muslim community. This finding confirms the previous study conducted by PPIM Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta involving 500 teachers of state and private schools throughout Java. The study found that most of the respondents opposed pluralism and tended toward religious conservatism²². Although the survey was not mainly about EFL teachers, my research suggests that Indonesian EFL teachers tend to be conservatives rather than progressives.

3.2.4 The gap between what to plan and what to teach. My research participants are varied regarding their professional status. I categorised them into three: curriculum developer, curriculum servant, and curriculum abstainer. Those who are in categorised as curriculum developer tend to recontextualise the curriculum following the guideline. Meanwhile, curriculum servant tried to do coping mechanism by which they only copied lesson plans from other teachers. Lastly, curriculum abstainer did not implement the policy.

From teachers' lesson document, I found that teachers who are curriculum developers and curriculum servant understood how to implement the character education policy. That is, they must introduce the 18 values that comprise national and universal values. However, rather than selecting the values suitable to the topic, they tend to teach the value of religiosity in classe.

3.3 Discussion

My study has identified that education in Indonesia have been used as both cultural reproduction and cultural transformation. In the first level of the agency, the policymakers seemed to embrace the two thoughts of conservatives and progressive respectively. They made educational objectives and the standards with reference to the scholars from universities and research bodies who are experts in the related fields. Therefore, the ideas and values in this first stage mostly reflect esotericism, ideal, and to a certain degree, utopia. In the level of the pedagogic field, however, classroom teachers interpret the curriculum using their lenses and decide what cultural values are suitable with them and their students.

In addition to the balanced national and universal values in educational curriculum, education in Indonesia is very much infiltrated by religious values in the level of policymaking and teaching practice. Hence, in terms to the causal effect of education on culture, the intervention of various groups, including central government, religious community and teachers

²² Hasan, N. Islamizing formal education: Integrated Islamic school and a new trend in formal education institution in Indonesia. RSIS Working Papers. 2009, Retrieved from <http://dr.ntu.edu.sg/handle/10220/6103>

in the processes of educational reform and its implementation has been made evident in my studies.

Education and its curriculum ultimately become a political matter and is never ideologically free. As mentioned before, reform in educational policies involves contestation that engages the cultural selection, values and aspirations of dominant social groups^{23 24}, and there are always questions regarding what groups initiate a change, what values are weakened, and "what values remain strong". The embracement of religiosity in the education act has illustrated how religious dominant groups impose transmitting their values and belief to the younger generation. Such tendency will cause the esoteric knowledge proposed by the authoritative to be distorted or misunderstood by agents in pedagogic fields. My studies on teacher's dilemmas shows how teachers tend to prioritise their values and believe in introducing to students²⁵

4. Suggestions and conclusions

My suggestion is that the Indonesian government must reshape its education for cultural transformation, alongside cultural transmission. Therefore, more efforts need to be undertaken, especially in the introduction of educational policies. Any policy should be made for the sake of developing the whole community regardless of their cultural background, i.e. from the dominant or less dominant culture. Idealism and the balance the government has outlined in the level of policymaking needs to be relayed by teachers to students. Also, the school culture that allows learners to think critically and objectively need to be nurtured. In doing so, the government needs to invoke the recontextualisation agents' awareness, including teachers, regarding the objective of any reform in education.

As my closing statement; we, as educators, need to realise that to a certain degree, education is essential for transmitting the existing culture. More importantly, however, education for cultural transformation is indispensable. Herewith, I need to quote statements from inspirational people such as Nelson Mandela, George Washington and W.B Yeats regarding education.

"Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire (W.B. Yeats)

"Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom." (George Washington Carver)

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Nelson Mandela)

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²³ Jeffers, G. The transition year programme in Ireland. Embracing and resisting a curriculum innovation. *The Curriculum Journal*, 2011, 22(1), 61-76.

²⁴ Macdonald, D. Curriculum change and the post-modern world: Is the school curriculum-reform movement an anachronism?. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 2003 35(2), 139-149.

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Appendix: Class observation, School 2, Teacher's name: Budianti

Class	Lesson	Value in lesson document	RD—what kinds of activities did the class involve	Selected moments
1	Narrative text	communicative, democratic, and precise	<u>Salam</u> (Greeting), praying before starting the day, Teacher exposition, interactive explanation, pronunciation drill, Seat Work, media presentation, <u>Salam</u> (greeting for closing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher asks students to conclude the moral values of the story → to obey and respect parent especially mother • In Interactive explanation, teachers keep asking students to express their feeling. • Teachers modelled democratic values by having students answer her question without fear. No matter the answer was right or wrong • ..pronunciation drill taught students to be "precise"
2	Narrative text	cooperative, creative and precise	<u>Salam</u> (Greeting), taking attendance, review, teacher Exposition, triadic dialogue, pair work, teacher check, seatwork, pronunciation drill, reading aloud, <u>Salam</u> (greeting for closing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ..Teacher touches a student hair smoothly while asking him to have his hair cut • Pair work—modelling the cooperative • ..pronunciation drill taught students to be "precise"
3	Narrative text	<i>love to read and precise</i>	<u>Salam</u> (Greeting) Teacher Exposition, group work, seat work, Board-work, Teacher check, teacher summary, Triadic dialogue, Pronunciation drill, <u>Salam</u> (greeting for closing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading a story (to instil 'love to read' value) • reprimand → T asking a student to tidy up his uniform (dress) • In teacher-student dialog, teachers remind students to perform prayer on time. • teacher sums up the moral values of the story → in order to succeed, we need to work hard, pray to Allah • Money is not everything, don't be materialistic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible/invisible pedagogy of morality • Teaching morality through reading stories • Transmitting values: respecting parents • Transmitting religious values: prayers 				