

Character Education for 21st Century Global Citizens – Retnowati et al

by Anik Ghufron

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Developing the culture of quality in learning: A case study in Indonesia

A. Ghufron

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: Qualified learning has become universally desired. This type of learning is believed to be used to prepare the excellent Indonesian human resources. However, the problem is how to create effective learning according to the expectations of different groups. Various methods were taken by the nation, the people, and the country of Indonesia, and even the issue of quality was raised to be one of the educational development strategies. Based on the study of various views on improving the quality of learning, the activities of developing the culture of quality in learning is an interesting topic to review. Developing the culture of quality in learning can be done through developing the work culture in learning activities, formulating the focus of improving the quality of aspects of learning, motivating all parties to improve the quality of learning, observing the behavior of excellent performance in learning, and assessing the culture of excellence in learning.

1 INTRODUCTION

Learning is an essential activity for preparing students to be valuable human resources. The learning process involves the transmission and transformation of all learning experiences from the teacher to the student. At the end of the learning activities, students are expected to optimally develop their potential.

Ensuing learning activities for preparing the learners to be an excellent human resource is not too excessive if all interested parties in the field of learning (family, government, and society) are willing to improve the quality of learning at all levels, extents, and sorts of education. The process should involve continuous improvements in the quality of the learning activities.

In Indonesia, improving learning excellence at every level of education is a strategic step that needs to be followed if the nation wishes to be competitive in various fields of life in the global era. Why do we need to improve the quality of learning? One reason is that learning is concerned with the development of human resources. Tilaar (1998) says that education (learning) is part of the effort to improve human wellbeing and it is part of national development. The Indonesian National Education Department's strategic plan (National Education Department, 2005), states that education is a systematic process that serves to improve human dignity. In Indonesia, education is formulated to educate the

nation so that every citizen has the capacity to actualize them self in their society.

Trianto (2010) suggests that learning is a two—way interaction between a teacher and a student, where both intense and targeted communication (transfer) leads to a pre-determined target. According to Sagala (2009), learning is teaching students to use the principle of education and learning theory as a major determinant of educational success. Learning is a two-way communication process; teaching is done by teachers as educators, while learning is done by students. While Suherman et al. (2003) state that learning is the process of education in the scope of schooling, so the meaning of the learning process is the interaction between a student with a school environment, such as a teacher, a source or facility, or a fellow student.

There are many methods that have been used by those who care about the field of learning to attempt to improve the quality of learning. These methods can be grouped into two categories—the structural way, and the cultural way. Perhaps, more structural ways may be more workable than cultural. How successful has this strategy been? Based on observation, methods to improve quality of learning have not yet been maximized. Implementing new methods to improve the quality of learning also tends to introduce new problems.

What efforts can be made to further improve the excellence of learning? One way that this can be achieved is through developing a culture of quality in learning. This method is relevant because it touches on habituation and action in improving the quality of everyday learning.

2 DISCUSSION

Three major topics are addressed in the discussion: the definition of learning quality; improving the quality of learning; and the development of a culture of quality in learning. These are three important areas to consider when addressing the problem of the ineffectiveness problem of the learning improvement movement in the learning activities.

2.1 *Definition of learning quality*

The meaning of quality can be studied from two perspectives, namely etymology and epistemology. Etymologically, the term of quality is known as “standard” of Quality means size, namely as a degree. Therefore, if one refers to a book as being of a high quality, then the person wants to say that the book has a good degree of content (substance) and coherent exposure.

Epistemologically, quality has several meanings—as many as the experts who develop the meaning of quality. Also, the meaning of quality is strongly influenced by the point of view of the developers. For example, Sudarwan (2007) defines the meaning of quality as the degree of excellence of a product or the work, both in the form of goods and services.

In the author's view, although the meanings of quality may vary, the focus of the study remains on the "degree, excellence, meaning, and significance" of an object or activity. Quality is always related to the term of "superior, degree, and benefit".

What about the meaning of qualified learning? By applying the aforementioned meanings, qualified learning can be defined as the degree or level of quality of all aspects of learning. Matthew (2016) states that "instructional quality" refers not to any measure of actions taken in the classroom (such as observations of class sessions), but rather to the full set of classroom interactions that affect student learning, including the ability of the instructor, the quality of instruction delivered by that instructor (including curriculum, teaching methods, etc.), and other classroom-level factors such as peer effects.

With this definition, the meaning of qualified learning encompasses all aspects of learning. Even if it is related to the concept of integrated quality management, learning is said to be excellent if there is a win-win situation—that is, all those involved in learning activities feel happy, are treated fairly, and are served well (Pulungan, 2001). In this context, the aspect of satisfaction becomes one of the criteria related to the qualified learning activity (to determine whether it is qualified or not).

Based on the description above, it can be inferred that qualified learning can be defined as a code that describes the learning process taking place as superior, adequate, and provides benefits for the development of the learners. This is not only examined by the learning outcomes, but also by the learning process.

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2.2 Improving the quality of learning To improve the quality of learning, it is necessary to know which aspects of education will be

improved. The aspects of learning need to be upgraded first prior to the activities. Logically, we will not be able to determine and conduct activities to improve the quality of learning when the aspects of learning to be improved are not well identified. In addition, efforts to improve qualified learning should also consider the inter-relationship between aspects of learning that form an integrated system.

Improving the quality of learning is intended as an activity to improve learning performance in all its aspects. Aspects of learning may relate to input (raw, environmental, and instrumental), processes, and products (output and outcome). All of these aspects can be regarded as the scope of activities to improve the quality of learning through implementing various approaches and ways.

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In Indonesia, improving the quality of learning is positioned as part of the four strategic issues of educational development. Improving the quality of education needs to be done immediately because the results are related to the students' learning abilities significantly. This is in line with the opinion expressed by Darling-Hammond (2003), who stated that "during the 1990s, a new policy hypothesis—that focusing on the quality of teaching

would provide a high-leverage means for improving student achievement—began to gain currency”.

There are several things that can be done to ² improve the quality of learning. In terms of its scope, improving the quality of learning can be done at a macro or micro scale. Based on the method or approach, improving the quality of learning can be achieved through structural or cultural approaches.

The question that should be addressed is, “Which learning quality improvement approach is most relevant?” To answer that question, the first thing to do is to recognize the aspects of learning that require improvement. The next step is determining the method of learning that will be implemented, in accordance with the aspects of learning to be improved.

For example, we can use the PDCA (plan, do, check, and act) approach to improve the quality of learning. When using this approach, the first thing to do is to develop a design related to the learning problem to be solved; this can be done by using various problem analysis techniques to discover the causes of the existing learning problems, then developing effective ways of solving the problems or identifying improvements that can be made. The second step is to take action in accordance with the procedure of learning approach that has been planned. The third step is to evaluate the results of any changes or the improvement of learning quality related to the actions taken. The final step is to follow up on any changes that occur and make adjustments if there has been no improvement in the quality of learning.

2.3 Developing a culture of excellence in learning

A culture of excellence can be defined by a circumstance or condition that indicates that most or even all people are already behaving, practicing, or accustoming themselves to performing their best. It cannot be separated from the meaning of culture as a tradition or a habit that has been developed.

With the above understanding, people often use the term “culture of excellence” as a goal to be realized in the future. Similarly, this term is often used to describe a situation in which the traditions and habits of excellent performance have developed in a particular institution or work unit.

Furthermore, if the meaning of a culture of excellence is brought into the context of learning activities, it can be interpreted as a condition or situation which indicates that some or even all parties involved in learning activities have internalized and familiarized themselves with excellent performance in organizing the learning activities. They carry out the learning activities not merely to fulfill the wishes of the leaders, but in themselves there has grown an awareness to always behave and make excellent performance in organizing the learning activities.

How do we develop a culture of excellence in learning? We realize that culture contains many aspects: artifacts, norms, values, and assumptions; thus, the development of the quality of learning must consider those aspects. Consequently, the first step should be to carry out a study of the essential aspects contained in the culture of excellence in learning, then setting a strategy for its development.

2.3.1 Work culture in the learning activities The first step in developing a culture of excellence in learning is to document the learning culture that takes place in the school. This information-gathering step can focus on the artifacts, norms, values, and assumptions that develop in that school.

The results of this process are followed up with activities to translate and interpret the content of the artifacts, norms, values, and assumptions. Based on the translation and interpretation of this content, we can figure out the characteristics of the performance and the parties that involved in the learning activities in the school.

2.3.2 Formulating the focus of improvement of the quality of learning The formulation of the focus of improvement of the quality of learning is informed by the results of the findings or performance profiles of the parties involved in the learning activities. Thus, the focus of improving the quality of learning does not cover all aspects of learning; it only covers certain aspects of the quality of learning.

In this fashion, the actions of improving the quality of learning become increasingly focused and the success rate becomes easily measurable. At this point, we are expected to behave excellently step by step toward a broader and more comprehensive stage in order to realize the quality of learning in all aspects of learning.

2.3.3 Motivating all parties to improve the quality of learning This activity aims to invite, direct, and encourage all parties to always improve the quality of learning by using a variety of approaches. It is not meant to force excellence in organizing learning activities.

The key idea of the activity is “how to raise self-awareness of the parties to always behave excellently in organizing learning activities”. Hence, it is necessary to use various techniques to motivate others, so that they consciously perform excellently in organizing learning activities.

2.3.4 Observing excellent performance behaviors in learning It is necessary to observe the excellent performance behaviors in conducting learning activities. This observational activity is conducted to identify, recognize, and understand various behaviors that have excellent performance in the learning, both inside and outside the classroom.

The observations include looking at the various actions to improve the quality of learning, observing the habits that show the excellent performance in learning, and

observing the positive impact of habits with excellent performance in learning.

2.3.5 *Assessing the culture of excellence in learning* Assessment needs to be conducted to find out whether the excellently performed learning activity has become a tradition or habit for most or even all parties involved in the learning activities. This assessment focuses on aspects related to the culture of excellence of the learning such as artifacts, norms, values, and assumptions.

The form of activities may be in quantitative or qualitative form in accordance with the purpose of assessment. Quantitative assessment is used to assess aspects related to the numbers. Meanwhile, qualitative assessment is used to assess aspects related to characters and values.

3 CONCLUSION

The quality of learning is something that has long been everybody's concern. Nevertheless, the issues of the quality of learning have not been solved until recently. The government has tried to solve the problem of how to improve learning quality by using various methods, but the result is not yet as expected.

In order to participate in developing and improving the quality of learning, with the serious efforts and support from various parties, the activities of developing a culture of excellence in learning in the educational unit are necessary. There are various ways to develop a culture of excellence in learning, such as by describe the benefits of the culture in learning activities, formulating the focus of improving the quality of aspects of learning, motivating all parties to improve the quality of learning, observing the behavior of excellent performance in learning, and assessing the culture of excellence in learning.

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