Perspective Transformation: Making Meaning of Parenting Experiences

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Abstract
Parenting behavior is determined by the frame of reference or perspective of the parent which is learn through daily interaction in context on their socio cultural. Therefore, parenting education should be directed at the development of the perspective based on the social context. However, most parenting education programs do not pay much attention to these aspects, and tend to use cultural perspective of the program planner, both in terms of content and process. As a result, the program is less meaningful and may erode the local wisdom of the parenting. This paper will discuss a teaching model of transformation of parenting perspective based on socio cultural context.

Keywords: Parenting education, perspective transformation, and socio cultural.

Introduction
It is believed that parenting influences children development. It is determined by the pattern of beliefs and attitudes of the parents. The beliefs and attitudes determine parents-child interaction, while the process of parent-child interaction is a mediator of the influence to child development. As shown in Chen’s study (2000) that maternal authoritative attitudes and beliefs positively correlated with the low power usage, including the exchange of information and arguments, and negatively associated with the high usage of power, such as prohibition and grumbles. In addition, this parenting style positively correlated to the child’s participation in the communication process with the mother, and negatively correlated with deviant behavior, stubbornness, and the low response of the child. Meanwhile, authoritarian beliefs and attitudes of mother relate positively to suppression to the child and negatively associated with the use of inductive strategies. Related to children’s behavior, the pattern of authoritarian attitudes is positively correlated with less attitude and protests and stubborn of child. This reality indicates that the parenting style is an individual’s internal construction (Chen, 2000, Baumrind, 1996). This is in line with the constructivism
saying that the individual cognitive structure will determine the process of making meaning of the experience and the way how to interact with the environment.

Parenting style develops through informal learning experiences in the daily parenting practices (Simons, Ronald L, et al, 1992). In this process individual learn parenting attitudes and behaviors of her/his parents, and the culture such as values, norms and other artifact. This process goes continuously, and therefore, the individual acquire a number of experiences, accumulate it, internalize it, and made it as a part of her/himself. Individual, to some extent, is the sum total of his previous experiences. This experience will be an important instrument in the next learning process. When facing a new experience, the individual will use the experience to interpret and, if necessary transform it into knowledge, skills and new attitudes (Jarvis, 1992:14)

During this time, parenting education programs too emphasis on instrumental knowledge, i.e. technical knowledge related to care practices and tend to ignore the socio cultural context of learners. This program will not bring any significant change in parenting perspective, less meaningful and erode local wisdom of parenting. Notwithstanding its benefits, this knowledge was not sufficient to parenting in the postmodern era in which its change is not linear and diverse. According to Wiggins, and McTighe (Glisczinski, Daniel Joseph, 2005:13) living in the postmodern era needs perspective, empathy, self-knowledge which require learner to analyze and explain of information from variety of points of view, explain person's situation, and act on this learning in one's own life. Therefore, it needs transformation of the parenting perspective.

The Importance of Parenting Perspectives Transformation

In general, beliefs, attitudes and parenting behaviors are acquired through informal interaction in the daily parenting practices and without any explanation of their underlying assumptions (Simons, Ronald L, et al., 1992). This process is unplanned, unconscious, incidental, but continuous. The knowledge and skills generally is not accompanied by rationalization and taken for granted (dogmatic), and used without understanding the underlying assumptions (tacit). This knowledge generally based on the cultural value system of the community. As a result parents do not understand the assumptions that underlie parenting behavior and attitude. This learning experience accumulated and forms schemes (Piaget, 19), or the perspectives and meaning schemes (Mezirow, 1977). Perspective and this meaning schema are to be an instrument for the individual to understand the reality. Perspectives and meaning schemes of parents are derived from the past, so it is inadequate to respond to various current problems that arise in different socio cultural contexts.
Knowledge acquired through informal learning tends to be tacit where the individual is not able to explain or abstract it (Michael Eraut, 2000), and relatively well-established (and Carusetta Cranton, 2004), so many parents do parenting mechanically and routine. As reminded by Brookfield (1998) that many adults who have lived for some decades but they are very poor of experience. They undergo regular life, from time to time, and do not change significantly. Although always face the new challenges and problems, they cope it with the old ways. Their problem-solving process is never assessed and critically reflected, so their experience will distorts the learning process.

Changes in the perspective needs deconstruction of the old paradigm and reconstruction of new modes of thought that respects the existence of self and others (Edmiston, 2005:8). Therefore, it requires the teaching process that could transform the perspective (Mezirow, 1991) accordingly, it required teaching model that can deconstruct and transform the mindset of parenting. One of the models is transformative learning. This model is supposed to be effective in helping people learn to reflect the frame of reference or perspective which is considered to be true and distorts the process of making meaning of new experiences, and transform toward a more inclusive, differentiate, open, able to change, reflective and able to integrate new experiences so that they can develop their opinions, beliefs, and act independently (Mezirow, 2000:8)

The development of the ability of parenting is only possible when there is change and / or development of perspective and meaning schema. It can be done through the process of critical reflection and make changes and / or development of the underlying assumptions of parenting practices. It means that we need teaching model that can help parents transform the values, knowledge and values into the new knowledge that is appropriate to the needs and development of children. Transformative learning emphasizes the process of helping adults to understand the psychological cultural assumptions critically, to interpret experiences in ways that enable them to clearly understand the problem, and acknowledge that the options are open so that they accept the responsibility to make decisions... Thus, the learner will realize an alternative of the meaning perspective which is appropriate to the situation, and become accustomed to it, open to it and use it to understand clearly what action to take (Mezirow, 1991)

Distortion of Perspectives

Learning is basically a process of making meaning of reality. Through this process the individual will acquire various value systems, culture of the community and the processes that accompany them, and accumulate them into structures of meaning. This process takes place on an ongoing basis in which a new meaning will
be saved and integrates into the structure of the old meaning. In the learning process, individual tend to use the already existing meaning perspectives. In this case, the individual will only accept and integrate new experiences which are suitable with the existing meaning perspective and will reject the experience that does not match with the existing meaning perspective. When facing the reality (events, objects) and the meaning perspectives is not able to interpret it or does not feels comfortable, safe or feel threatened by this reality, individual tend to ignore or refuse to interpret it. This process will take place on an ongoing basis, and therefore will strengthen and stabilize existing meaning perspectives. The more mature of the person the more solid and mature his/her meaning perspective, and therefore will be even less open to new experiences. Individual meaning perspectives will distorted the learning process, and in turn hamper his/her development.

There are at least three meaning perspectives that could distort the learning process. First, psychologically. It relates to self-image and psychological conditions of individual as a result of an unpleasant experience during early age. Treatments of parents that are not appropriate to children development and needs, both psychologically such as insults, calumny, ridicule, yelling, and physically, such as beatings, tear, slap, scold likely to cause trauma, and develop attitudes and behaviors that are not functional in the adult time, such as a sense of powerless, less confidence. Second, sociolinguistics. It relates to the meaning perspective that derives from value systems and norms, cultural of community, which is accepted as it is, without any critical thinking. These conditions cause the individual submerge and imprisoned in cultural thinking of her/his community, so he/she loss his/her critical consciousness which is characteristic of human life and the principal key to life humanely. Third, epistemic. It is derived from the view of knowledge, that are: a) the truth is something that can only be viewed and verified by empirical, b) the phenomenon which derives from social interaction can not be changed or beyond human control, such as epidemic diseases, environmental degradation, poverty, c) knowledge derived from experts or people who have authority are true, and therefore it is unquestionable (Mezirow, 1981).

The individual development will occur when an individual can make meaning of his/her experience authentically or autonomous, namely on the basis of a critical awareness of the interests, goals, action, and the assumptions that form the basis for such action. Therefore, individual need to transform the distortion of the meaning perspective.

The process of transformation will take place when individual faces a dilemma situation namely a condition in which the meaning perspective can not afford or cannot be used to interpret new experiences. This condition will cause an imbalance in the structure of meaning and encourages individual to achieve the
balance again. There are several possibilities that will be done to achieve the balance, namely, a) refuse to interpret new experiences, b) ignore the conditions and let it float where at any time will be seen again, c) adjust himself to the demands of the problems, and d) change the meaning perspective and use it to interpret new experiences. Of the four possibilities, only the fourth possibility that can lead to transformative learning process.

To be able to do the transformation, the individual must make a critical reflection to the meaning perspectives, namely to make assessment of the assumption that relates to the problem. On the basis of this reflection, and then find and select another alternative of assumptions which are seen to be more accurate and reliable. The chosen alternatives are integrated into the existing structure and to be a new meaning perspective. With the new meaning perspective, individual make meaning of experience and act on the basis of the results of these meanings. Meaning and this action can develop or strengthen transformative behavior and establish a new perspective.

The action based on a new meaning perspective is emancipatory actions, namely actions that based on self-awareness and autonomy, not an action directed by other people. It could strengthen the emergence of transformative behavior in a sustainable manner. But there will still be another possibility. Individual will feel comfortable with the new meaning perspective so that he will try to defend it. If this happens then he will return to its original state. Therefore it needs the process of perspective transformation continuously.

Transformative Teaching

The essence of transformative teaching is to help people learn to recognize critically the distortion of meaning perspective and transform it into a new meaning perspective which is more open and integrative. It can be done by using three principles:

1. Reflection

Reflection is process of viewing, analyzing and assessing of the meaning perspectives, in order to face the dilemma or confusing situation, caused by the contradiction between thoughts, feelings and actions as a result of epistemic, psychological and sociolinguistic distortions (Taylor, 1998: 8 ). There are three types of reflection, namely reflection of the content, processes and premises that underlie problem-solving. Reflections on the contents are the assessment of the contents or description of the problem. Reflections on the process are a review of problem-solving strategies used, in order to improve problem-solving ability in the future. Reflections on the premises can include evaluating the validity of norms,
ideologies, rules, roles, paradigms, philosophy or theory which is considered true. Reflections on the content or processes relates to problem-solving process. Reflections on the premise regarding the process of problem posing, namely: problemasing something which is considered true, and to be reviewed its validity. Reflections on the contents and the process will result in changes the meaning schemes or perspectives. Meanwhile, a reflection of the premises will result in changes the meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991: 104-111). Through reflection on the premise, individual will be free from the shackles of meaning perspective. As stated by Habermas (1971: 208) that self-reflection is intuition and emancipation, comprehension and liberation from dogmatic dependence.

2. Discourse
Process of reflection done through discourse, namely: the process whereby individual are actively involved in dialogue with others to gain a better understanding of the meaning of experience. In this discourse the individual will do a critical assessment of the assumption by considering the supporting evidence and arguments, and examining alternative perspectives. According to Habermas (Birgit Brock-Utne) to be able to realize the discourse there are two requirements to be met, that is open to arguments of others and willing to make changes after considering those arguments, and free from the compulsion to act. Therefore, to be able to participate actively in the discourse or dialogue, individual must have the ability to understand the perspective of his/herself and share experiences that are relevant to the subject, listen and truly understand another person's perspective, ask as question to his own perspective and reflect critically on his assumptions that have been considered correct, reflect critically of views of others on the basis of knowledge and experience (Wihelmsom:2006: 243-256)

3. Based on Socio Cultural Context
The process of transformation must be based on the socio cultural context of the leaner. It is based on the assumption that: (a) the experience can only be understood and interpreted in relation to the social context of culture (Clark, 1990: 260-261), (b) the development of adult skills closely related to the adjustment process in the context of socio cultural or in other words the cognitive development of adults is a function of social context, cultural, economic, cultural society (Labouvie-Vlief, 1998: 143), (c) cognitive processes are not solely psycho neurological process which is independent from the context of the social environment. The process of learning and knowing, creations and actions takes place in real situations; d) parenting is cultural action. Individual must acknowledge not only otherness in all its forms but also the plurality of his or her
own identity. Only in this way can parenting local wisdom be preserved as an adaptive process and as a capacity for expression, creation and innovation (Unesco, 2001). Therefore, the learning process and knowing are not just inculturation, but also enculturation (Wilson, 1993). This is in line with the Freire’s idea (1985) which stated that critical consciousness or perspective transformation cannot be achieved in a vacuum situation. Reflection process requires a media namely reality. Critical consciousness is integrated with the reality. Therefore, to develop critical consciousness, learners should be confronted with the reality (problems posing), namely through the generative themes.

Conclusion

In global society, life becomes diverse. Interaction among people increase intensively, not only among ethnic but also nations. In order to be able to parenting successfully and peacefully individual should have open perspective. It enables individual to overcome every problems that he faced. It means that parenting education should be directed at developing perspective. Transformative teaching is one model that can be used to facilitate parents develop their perspective. To be effective, it should be based on critical reflection, discourse and socio cultural context.

Reference


