Sociocultural Perspective in Education

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school can be re-created, made vital and sustainably renewed not by fiat or command and not by regulation, but by taking *a learning orientation*. (Peter Senge, et al. 2000, 5).

…"*better* schools are more tightly linked – structurally, symbolically, culturally- than the less effective ones" (Murphy, summarized by Townsend, 2007,3)

Introduction

Stories and discussions about educational aim have been around for long time but controversial in formulation as well as in implementation actions still exist, Access to and quality of schooling, as the mainstream of education, by all of the related age group of users have been found problematic and different kinds of proposed solutions have been taken and implemented.. At least there has been two formerly opposing traditions, namely the rational scientific technical tradition and the interpretive historical humanistic one. The other identification has been school effectiveness movement and school improvement movement accordingly. Amstrong (2006) proposed two discourses: academic achievement discourse versus human development discourse dealing with schooling. The best school would be the human development discourse using developmental criteria. Since the development era of the early 70s down to the present education reform, education development has been treated as subordinate of economic development.. School effectiveness, academic orientation focus, and the like have been dominating school improvement thought with bureaucratic organizational means and over regulation measures. Peter Senge statement at the opening of this article might provide with sign the final end of the school reform. Why should refer to sociocultural view for school improvement? Arguments by Murphy indicate the importance the internal sociocultural of the schools.

School improvement needs balancing thinkings, avoids either- or thinking (Deal & Peterson, 1994) in term of policies, plans, and actions, develops synvergent thinking (Gelb, 1995), thinks with the whole brain,and be aware of mind-sets (Gelb, 1995) or mental models (Boyett & Boyett, 1998; Senge, 2000). Building community in school, building culture in school, and building human orientation in school would generate community of teaching and learning for all students.

These conflicting approaches to deal with school problems have their roots in their paradigmatic position of the nature of society the schools exist and the nature of knowledge.

This article will discuss first paradigmatic roots of the different school improvement approaches, second generate improvement for all students in school, third building community in school, four developing school culture, five the central roles of school leadership, capacity building, empowerment, and broad school partnership.

Paradigmatic roots of different view dealing with school improvement

Discussing educational planning, Don Adams (1988) elaborated four paradigms of social theories proposed by Burrell and Morgan using two axes, one vertical the other one horizontal relating their view of the nature of society and the view of science. The ends of the vertical axis representing the view of regulatory of the society and the view of radical change of the society. The ends of the horizontal axis was located the view of objective and subjective view of social phenomena. The labels for the interrelated paradigms include the functionalist paradigm, the interpretive paradigm, the radical structuralist paradigm, and the radical humanist paradigm (Adams 1988, 408-409. based on metatheoretical paradigm developed by Burrell and Morgan identifying four science proposed a typology of social paradigm, paradigm defined as broad worldview or view of social reality. Put in the quandran the interrelated social paradigms as following.
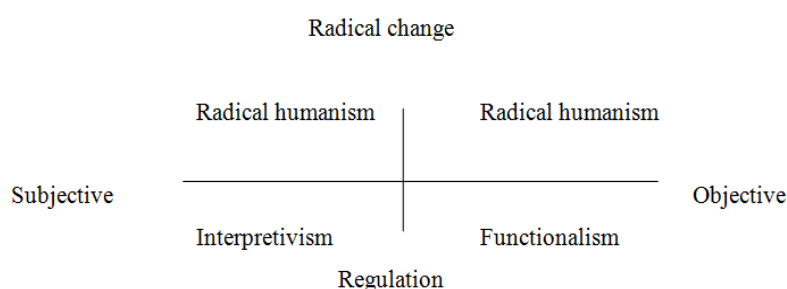

Figure 1. Fig 1. A typology of social paradigms (Adapted from Adams, 1988)

Radical structuralism and functionalism share their view of objectivity in epistemology for studying social phenomena. Functionalism claims systemic whole of the society and believes in orderly change in society, while radical structuralism assumes the existence of the of structure of domination of the society and believes that society has always in conflict by nature, Both tend to view and provide with conflicting explanation to same social phenomena. Both assume the quest for objective science of society and any institution within..

The interpretive and the radical humanism paradigm share subjective view of social phenomena, society exist without being independent of its members, but contrast in dealing with change in society, the former tends to assume orderly change the latter to commit to radical change.

Radical structuralism and functionalism paradigm assume society as hard systems required a hard system thinking to deal with, in contrast interpretivist and radical humanist treat society as soft systems which demand a soft system thinking (Adams, 1988). Much of the educational system including schooling belongs to soft systems fit well with soft system thinking accordingly, implied the limited result of the rational approach dealing with school problems, at least it is not sufficient

Using the four interrelated social paradigms of Burrell and Morgan, Adams create two basic models of educational planning (say dealing with educational problems and seeking for alternative solutions) along subjective-objective line being label as interactive planning at the subjective side and the rational planning at the objective side. Adams identified further three models of planning, namely technical political, and consensual model to deal with educational problems

INTERACTIVE   RATIONAL

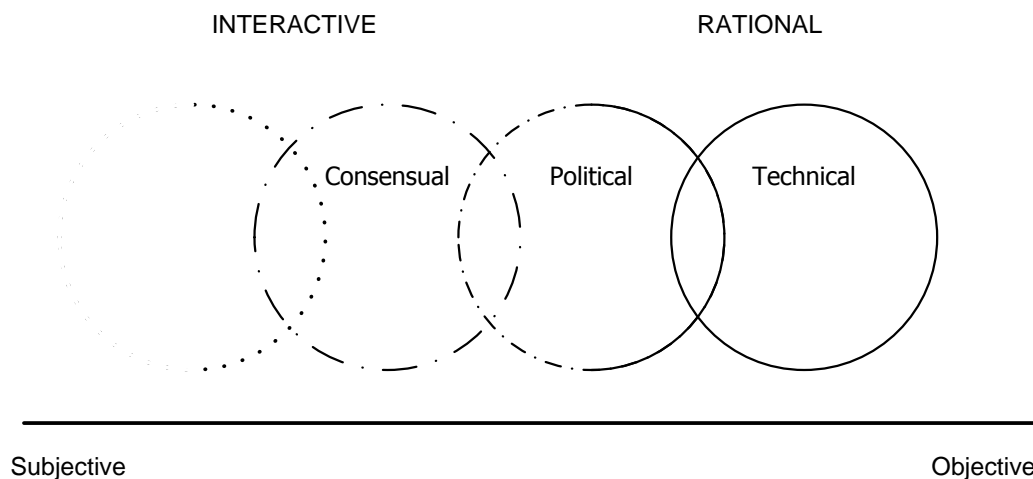Subjective   Objective

Figure 2. Models of viewing educational problems(Adapted from Adams, 1988)

The rational approach to school reform in term of the proposed policies and plans seems to dominate in overcoming the problems of schools generated by the central office of education; The government of Indonesia tended to follow this rational type of dealing with schools problems. The educational policy actions being introduced by the central government came to the districts and the municipalities without critical views adjusted the local situations by the middle and lower educational leaders. Improving access seems to be accomplished but it found short in term of quality improvement. This model of solution as one key fits for all sizes of the selected problems has been criticized as neglecting the contextual conditions of any area and any school. The expected results of this rational scientific approach to school improvement seems to be limited.

Another school improvement approach has been proposed viewing the school as unique demanding specific treatment due to its historical and sociocultural conditions and using them would facilitate the proposed improvement at work. The rational scientific view tends to be mechanistic and fragmented respond to school problems. The

overlapping of the technical model and the consensual (interactive) model is the political model being able to accommodate the technical and the interactive model. It is necessary to view school problems as human problems, human social problems, human cultural problems, human religious problems as well. The problems of schools should be considered in the perspective of socio humanity, not socio-bureaucracy, and cultural religiosity, especially for developing intercultural and interreligious learning and mutual understanding for school betterment as appropriate conditions for the school products and school development progress for the benefits to all students and the community.

Generate School Improvement for All Students

Goodlad argues (1984) that school can be improved and all student can be better; similar claim voice by Mortimor et al.(1988), by Glasser (1990), and Murphy in Townsend (2007), among others. Decades of research experiences using and applying the rational tradition approach found certain limited improvement of school learning.

Schools tend to provide with benefits only for small portion of students due to inappropriate strategies of improvement learning conditions to varieties of student population. What has been learnt from researches on school improvement?

Twenty years of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) experiences drawing from researches, international discourses, discussions and reflections it comes to believe with high optimism that schools could be improved to generate impacts of different kinds for all students with their differences... Townsend (2007,3) brings Murphy findings drawing from decades of researches four important points for school betterment. First, all student can learn with appropriate conditions. Second, the socio-economic level of the school location does not the determine the existence of good schools and the bad ones, value added is the product of the inside school factors, not the outside school factors. Third, stop blaming the victim for the shortcomings of the school. Four, the better schools are more tightly linked- structurally, symbolically and culturally- than the less effective ones, With proper strategies schools can be improved, can be made more effective, can be made better for all the students with more equity.

Hopkins (1996) sited by Harris (2002, 10) define school improvement in two meaning, the one is making schools better place for students and for students to learn, the general public use this sense. The two, more technical, school improvement as "a strategy for educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change" (Harris, 2002,10) The focus of the school improvement is the cultural factor, not the structural one. Building school culture would be the main strategy for school improvement. Hopkins and other (Harris, 2002,10) propose some assumptions in school improvement actions, including

> Schools have the capacity to improve themselves;
> School improvement involves cultural change;
> There are school level and classroom level conditions for change;
> School improvement is concerned with building greater capacity for change

So many school reforms have been introduced and implemented without proper understanding of the current conditions of the targeted school, their members, and their supporting communities with unclear status of the things being introduced. In case the things might be transferred from without no critical review being done. It good to learn from outside school, within and outside country, but the internal factors, assets, and capacity should be the primary consideration. It is necessary to make any effort to build internal belief that school can be change into the better one and each of the students can change themselves.

The process of the school improvement change has been identified using research finding from many countries discussed by many including Fullan; Hopkins/; and others. These followings should be understood and reflected to learn from. (Harris, 2002,11-12) lists the matters. 1). *Teacher development* is vital in school level change; 2). *Leadership* is important to secure school level change; 3). *No one blueprint* for action but the improvement approach should vary according to the type of school; 4). *Specific student outcome* should be used to select the change efforts.; 5). The importance of understanding and working with *school culture. (*italtic original)

Put Community Back to School: Individual Student Competition NOT Enough

Competition between schools, between parents, between students has been the main strategy to develop school quality and students outcome, Accordingly, only small portion of high level schools, higher parent status with their children enjoy the benefits the schools offer. Kim cofounder of the Center of Organization Leaning at MIT defines learning as the acquiring of knowledge skill from on-line dictionary and found the inappropriate learning practices as encouraged by workplace having characteristics that

- Learning occurs in the classroom away from real workplace, knowledge presented by expert and learner should demonstrate their mastery by answering the test
- Learning is individual and passive
- Learning follows the explicit rules, operating procedures, and policies of workplace

These characteristics of most learning at school similar to these kinds and wrong. In fact most effective learning having characteristics as follows.

- Learning on the job- real life not in the classroom
- Learning is social and active, not individual and passive
- Leaning is in the tacit stuff in .. dy-to-day activities

More importantly, learning occurs in the form of wheel of learning. It might start either from concept or from experience by actions and proceed around and around as concept follows by testing the concept, experience then reflect the experience to have new concept. In case learning begins with action having experience, it proceeds to reflection activities gives results in new concept and tested further in actions on and on. (Boyett & Boyett, 1008,85-87).

Building School Culture and Learning School

Researches provide with abundance evidences the positive roles of culture in creating good schools and high quality of student learning and outcomes., The cores of any school culture have been beliefs, assumptions and values about many things include the nature of students, learning, teaching,

knowledge school and classroom systems, about knowledge, morality, play and work, and etc. Deal & Peterson (199), the pioneer of school culture movement, argue that school culture is the heart of leadership indicating the central role of leadership and both direct school improvement conceptualization and actions. School culture generates social tie among school members, build commitment, e energize activities, enlighten school vision, mission and strategies, give meaning of everything at school.

The main component of school culture include beliefs, values, norms, ritual & ceremony (culture in actions) and symbols (embedded in histories and stories and classroom lead (Deal & Peterson, 1999). School and classroom leaders the culture to school members and stakeholders and embodied them as role models.. School social structure should derive from the school culture so as to build dynamic school and classroom life.

John Kotter prefers seeing the culture of an organization as appearing in the last stage of organizational change contrast to those work in schools. It would be about the strategy, the importance resides in the role of culture for generating massive and long term change. School improvement requires long work treating school in its complexity.

The concept of learning organization implies that not only individual learns but group and organization do also. Peter Senge has been called the father of learning organization. It has something to do with the wheel of learning discussed before.

The results of wheel of learning in workplace know-why and know-how does not lose, but store as assumptions, notions and theories about how our world and being called mental models providing function instruct and direct members actions (Boyyet & Boyett, 1998, 87).. The mental models could be individual and collective (shared mental models and these are secured by the communities of practice. To secure change members of school should be aware of their mental models, in case of failure they could build new mental models match to the conditions. Learning in school could be maintain using the learning school being established.

Building learning school at each school has been strategic for the whole school development process especially for teacher professional development by building teaching community development within as well as across schools. Fullan gives remark the weakness of teacher professional development using in-service scheme not on – the-job setting. The creations of learning school provide wide scheme contexts of teacher development.

Leadreship, Empowerment, Broad School Partnership, and Capacity Building Matter

School and classroom leadership have been found central and vital to generate school improvement. They have roles to empower themselves, students and their school organization.

School leadership should be managerial leadership working in team improving the school.

School and classroom leadership could synthesized leadership in formal and informal organization. They should work more with culture and structure with more human orientation.

They should develop wide school partnership in order the school getting powerful dealing with school problems. Mutual benefit, inter trust principles, work together, sharing information should be provided,

Capacity building should be carried out to support school development via change. It would be unlikely to have steady long journey without building capacity in many kind of school, classroom and community affairs.

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