



## **THE RISE OF NATIONAL PLUS SCHOOL IN INDONESIA – EDUCATION FOR PARENTS AND GOVERNMENT**

## **PENINGKATAN SEKOLAH NASIONAL PLUS DI INDONESIA – PENDIDIKAN UNTUK ORANG TUA DAN PEMERINTAH**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores a social movement that has happened in Indonesia in the field of education. It also explores its effect to ‘educate’ the government as well as most parents in the country about the education quality in Indonesia. The exploration focuses on how this new concept of education which is referred as National Plus school was introduced to society that has encouraged many people to develop the schools with the same (national plus) concept. It also focuses on the parents who have learnt more about the new education system then participate in it by sending their children to such the schools. Not only in the grass root level, has it also focused on the factors of the government who was indirectly forced to respond this phenomenon by developing international-leveled school. This movement has happened nationally within the last 10 years and has changed the national curriculum as well as educational system, including the recognition of special needs students among the government schools. This movement has changed the old conventional style of education that was commonly found in Indonesian national schools.

**Keywords:** adult learning, National Plus, national education, movement

### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini membahas tentang sebuah gerakan sosial yang terjadi di Indonesia di bidang pendidikan. Artikel ini juga menggali pengaruh gerakan social terhadap 'mendidik' pemerintah serta orang tua di negeri ini tentang kualitas pendidikan di Indonesia. Eksplorasi berfokus pada konsep pendidikan baru yang disebut dengan istilah “Sekolah Nasional Plus” yang diperkenalkan kepada masyarakat yang telah mendorong banyak orang untuk mengembangkan sekolah dengan konsep yang sama (nasional plus). Artikel ini juga berfokus pada orang tua yang telah belajar

lebih banyak tentang sistem pendidikan baru yang kemudian melibatkan mereka berpartisipasi di dalamnya dengan mengirimkan anak-anak mereka kesekolah-sekolah tersebut. Tidak hanya di tingkat dasar, tetapi juga difokuskan pada faktor-faktor pemerintah yang secara tidak langsung dipaksa untuk menanggapi fenomena ini dengan mengembangkan sekolah berstandar internasional. Gerakan ini terjadi secara nasional dalam jangka waktu 10 tahun dan telah mengubah kurikulum nasional serta sistem pendidikan nasional, termasuk pengakuan dari siswa berkebutuhan khusus di antara sekolah-sekolah pemerintah. Gerakan ini telah mengubah gaya konvensional pendidikan yang umum ditemukan di sekolah-sekolah nasional di Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** pembelajaran orang dewasa, National Plus, pendidikan nasional, gerakan

## A. INTRODUCTION

The course of education system in Indonesia has gone through some development in the last couples of decades. The current education system in Indonesia is divided into four levels which are primary school, middle school, secondary school and higher education. The government had issued some policies which contributed to the improvement the access, availability and affordability of education in Indonesia. In 1994, the government decided that all children in the age of 7 to 15 had to undertake nine years of compulsory education, six years at elementary level plus three years in junior high school level, which was referred as primary education (Suryanto, 2009). The school operational assistance grant (*bantuan operasional sekolah* or *BOS*) which was introduced in 2005 was also another effort of the government to provide access to universal education in primary and junior secondary schools. As the result, the participatory number of students aged 13-15 who participated in primary education raised to 94.48% in 2006 (Bappenas, 2009). At the moment, Indonesia is now close to achieving universal primary education (OECD/ADB, 2015). After the completion of primary education, students are encouraged to continue their education to secondary school level. There are two types of secondary school which are *Sekolah Menengah Atas* (senior high school) and *Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan* (vocational high school). Students from SMA are prepared to go to colleges/universities while students from SMK are prepared to be ready to work after finishing their school without attending colleges/universities.

Along with the improvement of the policies related to education, the curriculum had also changed. The changes of Indonesia's national curriculum does not necessarily happen only because the change of the government structural (Wirianto, 2014). National curriculum evolves as the world itself evolves. Its existence is meant to predict and anticipate the special characteristics and skills the future world needs (Prihantoro, 2014). The centralized education system of Indonesia had given Indonesia's people limited access to the variation of delivery within teaching and learning activity in the main frame of the used curriculum. However in the end of the

1990s, for the first time education from private sector introduced the 'National Plus' concept which had soon become a breakthrough and considered as an alternative to the 'old' system of education (Wijaya, 2010). The new concept was rapidly spread out to other cities in Indonesia and became a social movement that pushed the government to revolutionize the education system in Indonesia.

The government then adapted the new development with issuance of the decree number 20/2003. The new decree allowed a more decentralized system of education among schools in Indonesia. Before the issuance of the decree, the content, method of delivery, objective and assessment done in schools were regulated by the ministry of education (Firman & Tola, 2008). The implication of the decree was that the government provided standard competencies to be achieved once Indonesian students graduated as well as standard curriculum. The schools and their stake holders were allowed to be creative in creating the ideal school which fit their vision and mission as long as the standard competencies and curriculum were met and under the local government supervision. Therefore, the newly introduced national plus system did not necessarily put the current curriculum by the government to no use. The national curriculum was brought to the whole other level, enriched in content and delivery method as schools with national plus concept were the schools that offered education beyond the minimum requirements of the national Indonesian accreditation authorities (Manurung, 2015). Another case with the national plus concept was that some schools directly adopted the respectable major institutions curriculums such as Cambridge and Gandhi Memorial School curriculum with some addition of local content such as civic, history and Indonesian Language. When the foreign curriculums were brought into national plus school, the language of lesson delivery suited the curriculum producers' language which was mostly English that English or other foreign languages were introduced as second language that the students had the access for international knowledge. Different from conventional schools where students just sat, read and wrote, national plus schools adapted western teaching styles where active students' participations, creative teaching and alternative teaching mediawere encouraged. Students in such the schools spent 5 days in school with about 7 – 8 hours each day while the students in national schools spent 6 days of study (Monday to Saturday) with about 5 – 6 hours of study each day. Unlike the national schools where elementary schools and junior high schools were different institution, most national plus schools integrated elementary and junior high schools. The integration between elementary and junior high school supported the government program, the nine year compulsory education program.

Since some educators who worked in the National Plus Schools thought that there was a gap between national plus schools and the national schools, they founded an organization namely Association of National Plus Schools (ANPS) in 2000 (ANPS, 2011). This organization was also meant as a forum for the national plus schools to communicate each other, to find the solution of the problems they have with the government, to advance the interests of National Plus schools throughout Indonesia by identifying, maintaining, supporting and verifying acceptable

educational standards in member schools; to provide numerous and varied professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators employed by ANPS member schools; and to represent National Plus schools to governments and the external community, where and when this is necessary and appropriate (ANPS, 2011).

This movement had caused the development of many new schools (national plus school) in Indonesia. Many parents wanted their children to get the best education. The live discussions about it in TV got hundreds of inquiries. Almost everyday, the newspaper published news and opinions about it. More than that, many online discussions, mailing list and groups were dedicated for it. The adults (parents) learnt about this new concept, the benefits, the language instruction, the government accreditation etc. Since there were many options of such the schools, parents did not hesitate to go visiting the schools to compare each other. It was not commonly done by Indonesian parents in that time but then had become something usual. Parents did not send their children to go to a specific school only because of its well reputable quality. Parents had wanted to directly see the education process and then actively involved in their children's education. In Malang, east Java, Indonesia, the second biggest city in East Java Indonesia, at least 5 new national plus schools have been developed within the last 11 years. All of those schools were private schools (Malang, 2011). Some of those new schools had become talks among parents that they had to reject some students because of the capacity limitation. The development of the new schools shows how it had market that the development would keep going on.

Undeniable, only families from upper middle economy could enjoy this qualified education. Lower economy families couldn't afford to send their children in such the schools. National plus schools were criticized because their tuition was unaffordable by the lower economy families (Badriah, 2010; Wahyudi, 2011; Riman, 2011). The debates became more intense then the government came with a new program responding to the national plus school phenomena as their effort to provide high qualified education for all.

## **B. THE GOVERNMENT'S INVOLVEMENT**

After all the changing of curriculum in Indonesia, starting from curriculum 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968 (Leer Plan), 1975, 1984 (Students Active Learning), 1994, 1999, 2004 (base competence curriculum), and 2006(KTSP) curriculum(Osmiati, 2014), now the government implements 2013 curriculum. Before implementing this curriculum the government was in long debate and discussion to advance the national education quality. The starting point of curriculum 2013's history was signed by the government's respond to the education movement of the upgrading education quality done by the private education institution, especially, the alumni from the abroad who consider holding schools with western styles of teaching to increase the education quality in Indonesia. After the private education institution emerges with their own curriculum which combines both the national curriculum standard and the international curriculum, called National Plus School (Efendi, 2010).

Getting support from the government, National Plus Schools got space to develop their education quality. All the National Plus Schools felt free to adapt and adopt international curriculum. Since then the national plus school was a school with curriculums that were no longer just national in nature, but also based on international standards. This point was considered as a progress for Indonesian education (Lubbis, 2005) and made the government published the national education system to support the development of National Plus schools (KEMDIKBUD, 2003). It was said that the government should support every effort to advance the national education quality, including standardizing Indonesian's education as international education. Therefore in 2006, the government published a standard for a school to be classified as a national school (Kompas, 2009). It totally took more than three years for the government to finally recognize and respond this movement then about six years to publish the standard for such the schools (National Plus School).

After observing the result of National Plus School for about 6 years, the government concluded that this such school indicated good quality and improvement for students. Moreover, the applied education concept have the students to be more active, creative and participative. It then encourages the students to have critical thinking. Based on this conclusion, the government then developed international leveled schools since all national plus schools were private schools. The government, therefore; published one verse in the government's regulation No. 20, 2003, it was said that the government needs to develop education unit (school) in international standard. This verse was then interpreted by developing International Leveled Schools (*Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional*) in 2006 (Nurbaity, 2011). In article 50 paragraph (3) of Law No. 20 Year 2003 the government emphasizes that it is compulsory for every regional government to hold an International Leveled School at least one International Leveled School for every unit of education institution. This regulation was also meant to answer polemic and the critiques which said that high qualified schools were meant for the upper economy family only since all of them are private schools. It makes a gap among the society between the poor and the rich families. That is why people considered thinking that an intelligent students from low economic family have no right to study in such school (International Leveled Schools). To overcome this public polemic the government required the International Leveled Schools to receive at least 20% out of the total students from lower economy family. For such those students, the government waived all the tuition and any other expenses (Scottiati, 2011).

Based on that regulation, the regional government started holding an international school leveled by registering some schools to be RSBI (*Rintisan Sekolah Berstandar Internasional*) which will be examined to get better facilities of teaching aimed to chase international standard. By this regulation, some state schools start competing to be better not only in giving service to the students but also in building some school facilities in which impacts to the students' tuition fees. The students still have to pay more if they want to enter in RSBI school even though there had been fund from both central and regional government as result of the efforts of

the school to increase the facilities as international school. In fact, state schools are schools which belonged to the government provided education for the all citizen without seeing the differences across economic levels. It means state school must be able to give the best price will can be afforded by all people start from the low up to the high economic level. The situation in which the International Leveled School demanded to increase the study cost in order to cover the facilities which were needed to be upgraded made the intelligent students who came from the middle and low economic level got financial problems to enter to RSBI school as happened to the National Plus School.

Observing this polemic and seeing the effect which happened to the society, particularly to the middle and low economic level, the Constitutional Court finally decided to invalidate Article 50 paragraph (3) of Law No. 20 Year 2003 on National Education System in January 2013 (Kamal, 2013) due to the social polemic happened among the society, moreover, the poor society. It was proven by the Constitutional Court that article 50 paragraph (3) of Law No. 20 Year 2003 on National Education System contrary to the 1945 Constitution and has no binding legal force (Rosarians, 2013). The Constitutional Court explained that improving the education quality shouldn't be done by upgrading the education facilities to generate students with the skills equivalent to students in developed countries, but it must infuse the soul and national identity since nationwide education cannot be separated from the cultural roots and soul of Indonesia (Kamal, 2013). As in fact, most of the young generation studied in International Leveled School preferred using English to Bahasa Indonesia during the class activity. According to their understanding using English during the class in the International Leveled School is compulsory, while using Bahasa Indonesia only needs to be used during the period of Bahasa Indonesia class. Knowing this fact, the Constitutional Court considered that this concept will lessen the existence of Bahasa Indonesia among the young generation. Moreover, they admitted that speaking using English is cooler than using Bahasa Indonesia, their own native language. It then convinced the Constitutional Court to invalidate the existence of International Leveled School in Indonesia since the Constitutional Court believed that improving education in Indonesia should consider soul and national identity to instill patriotism to the young generation.

Another reason stated by the Constitutional Courts, "Holding an International Leveled School shows the government's different treatment since the average of high value is only for students of International Leveled School while ordinary schools will continue to lag" (Rosarians, 2013). Moreover, entering to the International Leveled School costs a lot of money since it is very expensive. It makes only high economic people who can take their children to this school. Due to all the reasons mentioned, the Constitutional Courts finally dissolve International Leveled School, all public schools which is maintained by the government which labeled with International Leveled Should return as regular school as before. In this point some people thought that the government ran backwards. They thought that dissolving the International Leveled School means bringing the education quality in Indonesia backwards.

However, the minister of education at that time, M. Nuh, had prepared a new brand of curriculum called curriculum 2013 as the answer of the social polemics after the dissolvment of International Leveled School.

Curriculum 2013 is a curriculum which is designed based on the achievement of objectives, content and learning materials and organizing learning based on Graduates Competency Standards in order to promote the understanding, skill, and character education (Fitriya, 2014; Molle, 2014). Mole (2014) stated that curriculum 2013 requires the students to understand the material, active in the process of discussions and presentations and have manners and discipline. Therefore, this curriculum tends to be referred as character-based curriculum since the core goal of this curriculum is to shape the students' character. It emphasizes the involvement and the activeness of the students to find the concepts of the subject they learnt while the teacher will only function as a facilitator. The concept brought by this curriculum is actually the same as one in International Leveled School. However, the different is in the concept of scoring and teaching steps in which teachers are demanded to include native cultures and values in teaching activities. Besides that, this curriculum also decrease the total hour of EFL material from 4 hours in a week becomes only 2 hours in a week. Overall, the concept of teaching which emphasizes on the students' participation shows that this curriculum influenced by the existence of the education concept in National Plus School.

The underlying reasons why the minister of education would like to implement this curriculum is because the government wants to prepare the Indonesian generation to face global competition. As sated by Mole (2014) that the government developed curriculum 2013 aimed to improve the quality of education in Indonesia and create the nation's next quality grade. Therefore, this curriculum 2013 is expected to be the answer to increase the education quality in Indonesia. After invalidating the implementation of International Leveled School, this curriculum implemented as the alternate solution. It is proven that a total of five schools in Palu, Central Sulawesi, become a pilot project for the implementation of Curriculum 2013 in the level of junior high school (Masa, 2013). What happened Palu also happened in other regions in Indonesia. Almost all the schools that got the first chance to implement curriculum 2013 are the ex-International Leveled Schools. It shows that curriculum 2013 is set as curriculum which functions to upgrade the education quality in Indonesia as the same as international education standardization. The Chairman of the Council Head of School Principals (MKKS) in Palu, Nurdin Arsid, added that the ex- International Leveled School is suitable to be the pilot project for the implementation of curriculum 2013 since they have already been accustomed to such a learning system (Masa, 2013). It also is convinced that the standardzaion of curriculum 2013 is set as international level without discriminating the level of the school. Although the ex-International Leveled School got the first chance to implement this curriculum, the previous minister of education said that the government does not plan to implement curriculum 2006 again even though now not all schools implemented curriculum 2013. The implementation of both curriculum 2006 and curriculum 2013 now is

intended as a transition before all schools implementing curriculum 2013 (Nurfuadah, 2015). Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (Permendikbud) No. 160 in 2014 the deadline for the use of the curriculum 2006 is the longest until the academic year 2019/2020. It means in 2020 all schools in Indonesia should have implemented curriculum 2013 to upgrade the education quality in Indonesia as international level.

The statement above indicates that the government considers upgrading the quality of education in Indonesia as international standard to avoid the education quality polemic among the society. In addition to prepare a qualified curriculum, the ministry education institution in Indonesia evaluates the implementation of this curriculum and revises the lack in order to make it more applicable not only for the teachers but also for the students during the process of requiring all the schools in Indonesia to implement curriculum 2013. This movement made by the government to lessen the gap of education quality got by students from the low and the high economic level. Besides that, it also becomes the effort of the government to prepare qualified generation for this nation aims to gain the nation's vision and mission in education field.

### **C. SOCIAL MOVEMENT, GLOBAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND ADULT LEARNING**

As explained in the previous section that the raise of social movement related to National Plus School was started by the alumni from the abroad who consider holding schools with western styles of teaching to increase the education quality in Indonesia. They built the private education institution emerges with their own curriculum which combines both the national curriculum standard and the international curriculum, called National Plus School (Efendi, 2010). Since then there are some schools whose standard was beyond the government requirement. To facilitate the information relating to the government regulation of this such school, those schools then united and founded 'Association of National Plus Schools' (ANPS) which were successful in using social medias to spread out their motives, methods as well as their system and ideology (Clover & Hall, 2005). The promotion in social media was not only social drama. The promotion showed their action as an effort to influence the education system in Indonesia (Clover & Hall, 2005). These all changes finally influenced the way of adults' (parents') sight in choosing qualified education institution for their children. Since then the adults (parents) who were not accustomed to visit to school to find information for their children before taking the children to school started doing a new movement. They began to find out the information related to quality, the curriculum and the concept of teaching at school. If they think it is suitable to their children condition, then they consider taking their children to that school.

The existence of ANPS as an NGO in National Plus School also assigned as great movement made by society. Through this NGO National Plus School that mostly are private schools were able to push around the government (Gallin, 2000, p.



4) to recognize the schools into their system. It was like a spark and took some time until this social and educational movement 'forced' the government to react. The government did not directly recognize the existence of such the schools in the beginning. There were many critics stated by the government for such the schools. At the end, they did not just recognize such the schools but also then 'imitated' those schools by developing the International Leveled Schools in 2006 based on the government's regulation in article 50 paragraph (3) of Law No. 20 Year 2003. In this regulation the government emphasizes that it is compulsory for every regional government to hold an International Leveled School at least one International Leveled School for every unit of education institution. It showed that the promotion in social media done by 'Association of National Plus Schools' (ANPS) had been able to influence the government to make decision of upgrading new regulation relating to internationalizing national education system. The influence of this movement was started small but then gave a massive impact to the education system in this country.

The founding of ANPS showed a big effort from those the concerned people to take action in this big movement. Those people learnt and they learnt at the incredible rate (Clover & Hall, 2005). Within the last ten years, many new schools in this concept had been built. This whole process had made people who were involved in education as well as people who were not directly involved in this movement seek more about this new system. In this point, the adult education took place. Those adult learnt informally outside the formal institution which provided education program (Clover & Hall, 2000). This whole process had transformed the education system in this country. Moreover, this also makes the government to publish law no 31 Year 2014 as the surrogate of Law No. 20 Year 2003. This law manages the regulation of holding an international education system and curriculum in Indonesia. Since Law No. 20 Year 2003 about International Leveled School invalidated by the Constitutional Courts in 2013, the government published law no 31 Year 2014 then to facilitate the regulation of private school in holding international education system. It is said in this law that a national school may have international education system by holding joint education with education system from other countries by still considering and using the national Graduate Competence set in national curriculum. The regulation and system of combining national and international curriculum is called SPK (Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama) (Khambali, 2016).

One other interesting fact was that most adults who were not educational practitioners involved in this movement were adult women (mothers). The nature of women as caregivers and nurturers of the family (Ismael, 2009) had given them the opportunity to directly involve with their children education. They wanted their children to get the best that required them to learn more about the present education system including choosing the best education for them. The mothers' high effort to pursue the information about education was shown by so many blogs and discussion forums in which most of them were managed and written by women. In the forum they asked and searched information about the newest government's law and regulation related to their children education. Therefore, they know very well about

the changing regulation made by the government regarding International Leveled School and SPK (Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama-Joint Education Unit). The fact about the new education concept and style was influenced by the western education style had shown the global influence to the education in Indonesia (Gallin, 2000). The western education concept was not directly adopted. It was also adapted that the term 'National Plus' occurred. This term showed that the traditional, national and cultural aspect were highly respected and enriched by the western concept. That is why the government published Law No. 31 Year 2014 to protect the national culture and values inside the education system held in Indonesia. It is stated that the joint between foreign education units and Indonesian education units include (1) the exchange of PTK, (2) the exchange of students, (3) the use of resources, (4) organizing the twinning program, (5) the organization of extracurricular activities, and (6) cooperation is considered necessary.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

The rise of national plus schools in Indonesia had been a case that showed global and local learning. What had happened and developed in one country might inspire other people in other parts of the globe. Nations in this world are in progress. Adults learn from each other out of the context of formal educational institutions. However, this informal learning in a massive social movement, as happened with Indonesian people in this education context, may influence the formal world. They who have learned informally bring back their knowledge to their formal world and applied what they have learned. This is one way the social movement can force the government (formal world) by indirectly put the agent of change inside the system.

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