MAKING TEACHING AND LEARNING MORE EFFECTIVE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

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ABSTRACT: In this article, we acknowledged that it is formal teaching and learning that has contributed much in creating a great civilization as we have it in the last few centuries. Yet, we argue that teaching and learning activities in our formal schools in general, during this Covid-19 pandemic in particular, are no longer that effective as shown by such facts as students who are not active in learning, who drop out of our school system, and who fail in schools and beyond. To overcome this problem, we insist that the following concepts be implemented in schools: 1. teaching should be no longer seen as transferring knowledge, skills, and values, but it has to be viewed as facilitation of students' learning so that they can be indepent, healthy, and socially and environmentally great; 2. learning should not also be seen as memorizing what teachers teach, but to a process of real development within students themselves so that they can be independent with great characters in and after schooling; 3. dialogical education should be the basis of our formal education; 4. students' potentials, interests, and needs should be the focusses of our formal education ; and, 5. educational evaluation should be more comprehensively done, that is, it should focus on students' cognition, skills, and affection, rather than on their cognitive aspect alone.

Keywords: teaching,learning, dialogical education, effectiveness, and multiple intelligences.

Albert Einstein: " Everybody is a genius. But, if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will spend its whole life believing it is stupid" (https://woazy.com/2018/06/03/225-kutipan-kata-mutiara-bijak-albert-einstein. Downloaded on 10 April, 2019).

INTRODUCTION

It is acknowledged that our modern world of today with its great achievements has been a major product of formal education. Without it, we would never be in a world of this great civilization and condition in almost every aspect of a human's life (Cubberley, 1948; Caldwell & Merrill, 1966; Rich, 1972; D'Cruz & Hannah, 1979; Watras, 2008). Despite our world civilization gloryas a product of formal education over centuries, in this article, however,we argue that teaching and learning activities in schools, including at tertiary level, are not always effective. Overall, such activities do not really give good results to any parties involved or related to education, namely: teachers who teach, students who learn, and our society as educational stakeholders at large.Even ourphysical environment, our very place we live on, has been worse because of, among other things, destructive activities by well-educated human beings who have created things that give us not only good products, but also environmentally dangerous by-products like pollution that comes out of our industries and transportation vehicles.

Educational ineffectiveness as suchis not, of course, a new phenomenon; it has even been with humans for centuries, even since the birth of formal education itself in Greek thousands of years ago (Cubberley, 1948; Caldwell & Merrill, 1966). During this Covid-19 pandemic, which has been arround for more than a year now, such ineffective results of formal education, we understand, seem to be worse. It is worse because of the fact that teachers who teach online simply try to inform their students what they need to learn and to do. They might want their students to go beyond that, that is, to help them improve their critical and creative ways of thinking, but they seem not to have enough time to do that[1].

At the same time, whattheir students try to do is simply to memorize and/or to remember what has been taught by their teachers on their own at home without any chance and/or willingness to question what their teachers teach them to. Many students

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[1]Teachers usually teach based on very strict chedules in which certain topics of certain subjects must be taught within some strictly allocated time one after another. It is understandable, therefore, that they have no time to encourage their students to think critically and creatively as it takes too much time for them. This is really not good because critical and creative ways of thingking are, among other things, necessary for someone to succeed in their life. The absence of critical and creative thinking is another example of how ineffective our schools are.

even ignore altogether what is taught online becuase they think that it is irrelevant for them or they cannot afford to follow what is taught or informed becuase they have nobody else to help them in their learning from/at home. Some students are lucky enough to be with their parents and siblings as well as relatives, but in general most students have to struggle to learn by themselves[2] and in many cases it makes them very disappointed, discouraged, and even frustrated.

Facing such condition, our students are "forced" to drop out along their educational process. Some students even commit suicide due to online learning which makes them frustrated (see, for example, *TribunManado*.co.id.,2020). Some hold on to stay and continue their education no matter how hard it is. Yet, at the end, they end up jobless and find it hard to be independent after finishing their schooling for years and spending a lot of expenses. Many of them go to work, but they fail to do their best: they are lazy, become terrorists, and/or involve in such crimes as corruption.

In addition, our physical environment as our common home, a place in which we live in, is getting worse as a negative impact of our poor education system as openly shown by those well-educated people who have destroyed our environment by throwing rubbish everywhere, slashing and burning forests as they wish, and producing "too much greeehouse gases" that, in turn, create global warming that puts the whole makind in danger (*Kompas.com., 2019*).

This pretty bad situationof education that, in turn, has created such problems to our very existence, is made worse due to the fact that teachers have to teach subjects that their students may not need or they are not interested in or they are good at (i.e. their talents are not closely related to the sebjects their teachers teach or the subjects the students have to learn). Teachers might realize that their students are not interested in what they teach, but they have to teach those subjects because they are parts of their school curriculum designed centrally by central government.

Such a poor condition, we are afraid, could move beyond Covid-19 pandemic[3]. If it hapens, our schools will continue giving poor impacts to us all now and in the future. This is why it is urgent that we have to make teaching and learning in schools more effective during this Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. In other words, making formal education more effective will create better results for our students, teachers, educational stakeholders, and, by implication, our physical environment.

We argue that making formal education more effective during this Covid-19 pandemic and beyond can be done by: 1) redefining what we mean by teaching and learning; 2) implementing what Paulo Freire calls "dialogical education"; 3) teaching and learning be based on students' potentials, interest, and needs; and, 4) students' learning results be based on a more objective and comprehensive evaluation. These will be described below.

Redefining Teaching and Learning

Based on the analysis of the impacts of misunderstanding teaching and learning in schools as we have described above, it is crucial for us to change our view of both teaching and learning, that is, to redifine both terms. We insist that teaching is not a process of transferring kknowledge, skills and values from teachers to their students. It is a process of facilitating students' learning processes(Rogers, 1982; Neville, 1989; Tans, 2011). This means that teaching starts with students' learning and, therefore, teaching unites with learning and learning with teaching. Both happens simultaneously.

In that sense, when the students are learning, their teachers are totally there, that is, in their students' learning activities, to make sure thatby learning they become better day by day. That is, they move actively, with great and dynamic spirit, from being uncapable to being capable, from being poor to being good, from being good to being better, and from being better to being the best in whatever they learn that, in the end, they can be independent, i.e. doing things they want to do on their own criticaland creative ways, through trials and errors, by asking and answering their own questions, by solving problems they face, and by doing tasks they have to do because those tasks will help them later in their lives do bigger tasks of their lives better and more comprehensive. This is why in our redefinition of teaching and learning, problem-based learning and task-based learning activities are crucial. Such activities will make the students more

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[2]During Covid-19 pandemic, such health protocols as physical distancing and social distancing are sometimes so strict that everybody has to work from home. So do teachers and students who have to teach and learn from/at home respectively. Having no contact with people from their outside family circle like their peers and teachers makes those students feel unhappy that, in turn, make them unwilling to study and/or to do their homeworks.

[3]We strongly believe that we can overcome this pandemic soon as many people around the world are now being vaccinated when this article is being written.

mature and capable of solving their problems in their real lives and of and of and of doing any tasks necessary to maintain and develop themselves and people around them as well as their physical environemnt after their formal schooling.

In that sense, teaching and learning actvities involve a total self of a student, that is, his/her cognition, skills, and affective domains. It does not mean that a particular student has to be excellent in those three aspects of himself or herself. If he/she is excellent in those three aspects, that is great. That student must be a very extraordinary one. Yet, if he/she is just (very) good at one or two of those domains, that is still excellent. This means that good teachers in that renewed definition of teaching and learning still view their students as excellent, even if they are (very) poor acdemically and psychomorically, but excellently great affectively.

So, teaching has to result in students' total and all out learning for their better and brighter future and, through them, for the better and brighter future of their family, their relatives, their nation, and, even, the whole world. Yet, if they do not learn (hard) after we teach them, we fail as teachers. So, in this sense, teaching is not (just about) transferring knowledge, skills, and values from teachers to students; it is about making students' learning easier so that they successfully move forward, "poor" to being good to being better to being the best or from being unable to being able to being abler to being the ablest in terms of cognition, skills, and attitude at once or in terms of combination of both cognition and attitude or of skills and attitude or of attitude excellence alone with "poor" cognitive and psychomotoric competences. Learning, in that very notion, is no longer a chance to master what is told, but to be better by being better in things that they are interested in because they have potentials for that and, therefore, they need it for their future.

We have to stress this redefinition of teaching and learning because it seems to us that since its birth in Greek thousands of years ago (Cubberley, 1948; Rich, 1972), our formal education, in which teaching and learning activities are its major part as we know it today,has been mainly seen as an act of transfering knowledge, skills, and values from teachers to their students. In many cases, it is morally right for teachers to do so because it helps young generations preserve any knowledge, skills, and great values that they have gotten from previous generations. By preserving those kinds of knowledge, skills, and values, young generation can survive and make their lives even better. This is why teaching as a way of imparting skills, and values to students from generation to generation is

seen as a teacher's act of moral responsibility (Thorndike & Gates, 1972; Dewey, 1972).

In that context of teaching meaning, learning is viewed as students' activities to master whatever knowledge, skills, and values transfered to them by their teachers in schools and, to a certain extent, by their parents at home. Along this process of learning, memorizing is crucially important. Students who are, therefore, good at memorizing are considered smart. Its focus is onstudents' cognition alone; students' psychomotoric and affective skills are mostly abandoned. This is why students with excellent psychomotoric skills like singing, dancing, playing soccer, and painting are not included as smart people because its focus is on cognition, not on their psychomotoric or affective aspects. The results of such kind of education is not that great as stated above, but, in many cases, people take it for granted and believe that there is nothing wrong with the idea since it has helped improve global civilization as it is today.

However, a critical look at such a practice of education, i.e. seeing teaching as a means of transfering knowledge, skills, and values from teachers to their students and of learning as students' activities of mastering what is taught by their teachers, is not educationally sound. This is supported by such facts as today's poor educational outputs in terms of their character, competence (knowledge), and skills that make them unable to be truly independent in their life after their formal schooling. Data per Ausgust 2020 released by Indonesian Statistic Office show that in Indonesia alone, there are 9,77 million people who are unemployed. This also happens in ASEAN; its unemployment rate has increased in the last few years (*Kompas Newspaper,* 10 Maret, 2021, p. 4).

Many people see this as a direct impact of Covid-19 pandemic, which is true, but if they were good at critical and creative thinking, they would have been able to overcome any problems they face in their life, including the problems caused by Covid-19 pandemic. In other words, although Covid-19 pandemic should also be blamed for such a large number of unemployed people in Indonesia and around the world, teaching and learning activites in schoolscould also be blamed since teachers and students have misunderstood what is meant by teaching and learning and that is why they fail.

Misunderstanding as, we believe, has created poor results of education. We have observed that it is even worse during this era of Covid-19 pandemic. It is so worse that some students even killed themselves because they have been disappointed by their teachers who fail to understand that both

teaching and learning have to be a lot of fun for students. It is, therefore, logical that we have to make our formal education right by, among other things, redefining teaching and learning as we have proposed here.

Implementing Dialogical Education

In addition to redefining teaching and learning, we also argue that making teaching and learning more effective can be done by implementing dialogical education. It is an idea proposed by Paulo Freire (1972a/b/1976). He believes that true dialogues between teachers and their students can make teaching and learning more effective. In such dialogues, he argues, teachers would find out their students' concerns and what they want in their lives. In other words, it is through those sincere and genuine dialogues with their students, teachers can find out what their students' problems are, how they could solve the problems, and what their dream of for their future is, which is usually based on their students' potentials. Those dialogues can also show their teachers reasons for wanting something and their planned ways to get what they want which, among other things, need such qualities as hard work, good discipline, and strong determination as well as believing in themselves that they can make their dream come true if it is related to their potentials and if they have such characters in their life to achieve it.

Based on their understanding of their students, according to Freire, teachers can then tell their students what they can or have to do to help them achieve what they want. In that sense, Freire adds, teachers can teach their students effectively because what teachers teach is what their students want to learn. It is understandable because our human experience shows that we usually do things that we want to. In other words, we do not do things that we do not want to do or to have.

On the other hand, what happens in our schools is the opposite of it: there is no open dialogue as suggested by Freire. It ends up, therefore, with teachers who teach some subjects that their students may not need because they have no strong talents on the subjects, they have no interest in them, and they do not need them. It is, therefore, logical to find out that they are lazy to study and tend to rebel against their teachers and parents concerning things they have to study or to do along their learning processes. When it happens, they fail. There is no doubt about it.

So, to avoid that, teachers and students should have sincere dialogues before they start their teaching and learning activities repectively. Such dialogues, we argue, will make teaching and learning more effective because what is taugh is what students want to learn to make their life brighter in schools and beyond.

Teaching and Learning Based on Students' Talents, Interests, and Needs

It is widely known within our school communities that one of the major reasons for educational failure as stated above is this: teachers teach things that are, in many ways, irrelevant to their students' talents, interests, and learning needs. Such a failure happens because teachers teach certain subjects that are irrelevant to their students. So, what they are teaching is what Albert Einstein has reminded us in his words of wisdom that we have quoted above: teaching a fish to climb a tree that ends up making it think that it is a very incompetent animal on earth.

By undermining their students' potentials in teaching, our teachers also neglect Howard Gardner's multiple intelligenves theory (1993). The result is that they fail. Whereas Howard Gardner is his theory has stated it very clearly that each of us, including our students, have all the intelligences needed to succed in life, but some of the intelligences are not as strong as the others. So, our students' task, supervised by their techers, parents, and/or relevant parties, is to make sure that they know what their major intellidence is and just work on that to succeed in their life in schools and beyond.[4]

Based on the theory of Howard Gardner, educational system, therefore,may not be centralized. It shoud be decentralized because it is the teachers who are supposed to understand their students' main/major inttelligences as they live with them day by day. In line with the idea of decentarlization of education, school curriculum

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[4]Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences theory (1993) says that there are more or less eight different types of intelligences that a person has, namely: 1*) logical/mathematical; 2)linguistic; 3) musical; 4) spatial; 5) bodily/kinesthetic; 6) naturalist; 7) interpersonal; 8) intrapersonal. In 2011, he adds such "candidate" intteligences as spiritual intelligence, existential intelligence, and moral intelligence (M. Marenus. 2020."Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences." simplypysychology.org. 09 June).* He says all such intelligences can be developed or made better. Yet, what can be developed most within a person isone or two types of intelligences which are stronger, not weaker. In other words, he argues, although all people have musical intelligence, for example, those who can make it world class are those who have very strong musical inttengence, have such characters as we have discussed above, and live in just asocially right environment like having good teachers and supporting parents.

should be designed by teachers based on their understanding of their students' talents/major intelliegences, interests, and needs.

It is sad to know, however, that nowadays our school system does not really work because, in many cases, teachers have no power to design their curricullum relevant to their students' needs, talents, and interests. The power to establish a curriculum is usually held by those decision makers who live far away from the students. It is, therefore, understandable why centralized education has failed and should be changed into a decentralized one to make it work for all (Tans, 2011; Tans *et al.,*2020).

Evaluating Students' Learning Results More Comprehensively

One of the major problems in education that often makes it ineffective is cognition-based evaluation of students' final terms at levels of educations like primary and secondary schools. What has happened so far is that school evaluation focusses too much on students' cognitive aspects and it tends to ignore their psychomotoric and affective domains. In that context, students will pass certain level of education if they have passing scores, usually between 60 and 100 (out of 1-100 range), whereas those whose score is below 60 will fail, although they are very good at psychomotoric aspect and/or affective aspect.

On the other hand, those who have passing scoresin that cognition-based evaluationwill still be considered pass, although their psychomotoric aspect and/or affective aspect is(very) poor. This method of evaluation contributes to educational failure because it is simply not fair in evaluating our students as real human beings whose existence covers their cognition, skills, and affective factors. So, when our evaluation of our students disregard their skills and affective competences and totally focus on their cognitive aspects, it is, of course, not fair at all.

Human beings, we know, can rely on any aspect of their personality to survive in their lives. This means that those who are not that good t their cognitive aspects, for example, can still succeed if they are good at both psychomotoric and affective aspects. Even if they are not good at cognitive and psychomotoric aspects, they can still succeed if they are good at affective domain. In other words, there are many people arround us who succeed simply because they are good, that is, those who have courage to fight for the universal truth; people who are honest, fair, humble, helpful, patient and many other positive characters that can make life better not only for themselves, but also for everyone arround

them, and for their living environmen. This is to say that succeed can rely on good character alone (Tough, 2014).

So, if we want our education works well, evaluation should be comprehensive, that is, its focus should be on a student's cognition, psychomotor, and affection which is based on the theory of humanism in learning and teaching (see, for example, Endang Fauzati et al., 2011). In terms of our students' learning evaluation, this means that we will, of course, let our students with great cognitive, psychomotoric, and affective aspects pass right away through certain level of education. Yet, at the same time, we will also let those with poor cognition pass because of their excellence in psychomotoric and affective aspects. This is also the case for those who may not be good at cognitive and psychomotoric aspects, but we will let them pass simply because they have good characters. They are good students.

On the other hand, those who are good at cognitive and psychmotoric aspects may not pass if they are not good at affective domain. This is, of course, logical. What is the point of being a genius or being an excellent musician, for example, if his/her character is poor, that is, he/she involves in crimes. This is why it is argued that good character alone can help anybody succeed (see, for example, Tough, 2014; Weber, 2015).

CONCLUSION

In conlussion, we should restate here that in order to be more effective, teaching and learning across ages, generations,and nations in general, during this Covid-19 pandemic periodand beyond in particular, can be made more effective by implementing the following concepts in our schools: 1. Definition of teaching be changed from transferring knowledge, skills, and values, to facilitating students' learning so that they can be more independent, better, and greater in terms of their cognitive, phsycomotoric, and affective aspects, socially and environmentally; 2. Likewise, definition of learning should also be changed from memorizing what teachers inform to a process of real changes within an individual, that is, to move from being depedent to being independent, from being poor to good to better to being the best; 3. Teaching and learning be based on dialogical education and on students' potentials, interest, and needs; and, 5. Evaluation be made more comprehensive, that is, it should focus students' whole existence as a human being who has such domains as cognition, skills, and affection.

If these concepts can be applied in schools anywhere in the world, our educational system, we believe, can be made more beneficial for all across ages, generations, nations, and cultures, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic that forces our teachers to teach and our students to learn online. We argue that eventhough it is done online, teaching and learning can still be done successfully if we apply those strategies wholeheartedly and totally.

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