Global Trend of Social Science Learning: Challenges and Expectations Toward ASEAN Community 2015

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**Introduction**

The idea of *ASEAN Community 2015* is a noble endeavor to maintain the existence of Southeast Asia nations as communities generally united under similar past experiences. What are the roles of social science teaching and learning in the era that tends to undertake rapid transformation of the social order of society? The following describes the alteration of the essence and purpose of social science teaching and learning in line with circumstances, expectations, and challenges within the life journey of national and global society; challenges and expectations from ASEAN society; and the steps to be taken by this nation, Indonesia.

**The Essence and Purpose of Social Science (Social Studies)**

The purpose of social studies always varies through time and era. It is constantly adjusted for social condition, national goal, and challenges from each society in each country. The definition or purpose of Social Studies or Social Education in America and Australia, for instance, has changed corresponding to the tendency of communal, social, and natural changes in those countries. Likewise, in Indonesia, we witness the modification of definition, propose, orientation, and material organization of social studies. Those changes are accumulated and reflected in the curriculum for social science courses and their teaching and learning proces.

The recent purpose of social studies in America, which is frequently quoted by social studies experts and practitioners in other countries, is put forward by National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1993) asserting that “the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens
of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world”. This purpose is a modified version from social studies purpose established by NCSS in 1980s:

*Social studies is a basic subject of the K-12 curriculum that (1) derives its goals from the nature of citizenship in a democratic society that is closely linked to other nations and peoples of the world; (2) draws its contents primarily from history, the social sciences, and, in some respects, from the humanities and science; and (3) is taught in ways that reflect an awareness of the personal, social, and cultural experiences and developmental levels of learners.* (NCSS, 1984: 251)

Statements of purpose and/or definition of social studies from the experts indicate some differences and some similarities, such as Edgar B. Wesley’s account in 1930s (Zevin, 2011) that “the social studies are the social sciences simplified for pedagogical purposes”. This definition played a role in the development of social studies, lasted for a relatively long time, and became a reference for other experts. However, after Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik in 1957, America realized its loss to compete in space technology. In 1960, prominent experts of social sciences gathered in Woods Hole, USA, to discuss school education curriculum considered to have some flaws and needed to be corrected. As a result, America announced a conference report entitled “The Process of Education”, and it became a guideline in curriculum research. The main recommendation of the report is that each discipline must have a structure. An effective teaching and learning process should find and form a structure. The period of 1960s and early 1970s in America is known as the New Social Studies period, which consists of a collection of innovations under federal funding. Though this project emphasized on curriculum reformation, in general, this project failed to alternate the coverage and sequence of social studies curriculum patterns in America, and did not positively influence the betterment of teaching and learning practices (Martorella, Beal, and Bolick, 2005). This reality stimulated social studies experts in America to change modify strategies and approaches of teaching and learning.

During post New Social Studies period, other experts (Barr et al., 1977; Haas, 1977; Banks, 1990) formulated a purpose with more emphasis on citizenship education aspect. Barr et al. (1977) asserted that “the social studies is an integration of experience and knowledge concerning human relations for the purpose of citizenship education. (Barr et al., 1977: 69). Meanwhile, Banks (1990) suggested the purpose of social studies for “helping students to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to participate in the civic life of their local communities, the nation, and the world” (Banks, 1990:
3). Although definition and purpose of Social Studies have changed tuning with challenges in each era, essentially, the purpose of social studies is not much different from the initial purpose presented in the 1916 Report of the Committee on the Social Studies that the broad aim or goal for social studies is the cultivation of the "good citizen" (Martorella, Beal, and Bolick, 2005:12).

In what ways has the purpose of social science teaching and learning changed in Indonesia?

Social science started to be a subject in school education curriculum in Indonesia when the Curriculum 1975 was put into action, especially social science subject in elementary school and junior high school. In the Curriculum 1975, social studies was defined as the integration of several social sciences subjects. In elementary level, it was mentioned that the materials of social science were supported by geography and demography, history, and cooperative economy, but for high school level, the materials covered geography and demography, history, cultural anthropology, economy and cooperation, book-keeping, and commercial arithmetic.

In the Curriculum 1994, social studies subject consisted of two elements related to social knowledge and history. In elementary school curriculum, social studies was dealing with social environment. Its study materials covered (1) social knowledge, meaning social environment (sociology, anthropology), geography, economics, and government administration (state administration); (2) history, concerning local history, kingdoms in Indonesia, prominent figures, historical events and buildings in Indonesia during colonial period, and some important events during independence era. In junior high school curriculum, social studies subject was defined as a branch of sciences exploring social reality of life covering geography, economics, and history. Learning approaches referring to was students’ active learning.

Post New Order reign influenced prevailing curriculum in that period. Some weaknesses of the Curriculum 1994 were exposed and it resulted in the amendment process. Consequently, the government decided to establish curriculum development policy that was finally known as the Supplement of Curriculum 1999.

In the beginning of the 21st century, there are some changes in political system, administration, and law order in society, nation, and state in Indonesia. Remarkably, MPR or People’s Consultative Assembly made four amendments to the 1945 Constitution within four years. This happening obviously affected national education system and school education curriculum. One of the effects was that the Legislative Board legislated the Law No.20 year 2003 on National Education System.
In the Law mentioned above, social studies became a compulsory subject in curriculum of primary and secondary education (Article 37, Subsection 1). In description section, some social studies coverage, including geography, history, economics, healthiness, etc., are intended to develop knowledge, comprehension, and analytical skill of students over social condition of the society. The Law of National Education System has provided an answer over the identity and status of social studies course in school curriculum, even though there were multi interpretations or even polemics, such as over these names; social knowledge, *pendidikan kewarganegaraan dan pengetahuan sosial* (PKPS) or civic education and social knowledge, and more.

After the establishment of Law No. 20/2003 on National Education System, recent prevailing curriculum in Indonesia, based on national standard of education (PP No.19/2005, currently altered to be PP No.32/2013), is the Curriculum 2006, which is also known as *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* (*KTSP*) or School-Based Curriculum. Permendiknas (Regulations of Ministry of National Education) No. 22/2006 on *Standar Isi (SI)* or Content Standard asserts that social studies is one of subjects to be offered in elementary school until junior high school, including those with religious basis or intended for handicapped students. There are some study materials in social studies teaching and learning, namely a set of events, facts, concepts, and generalization related to social issues.

There are different study materials of social science for elementary school and junior high school. For elementary school, they cover Geography, History, Sociology, and Economics. For junior high school, social science subject covers Geography, History, Sociology, and Economics. Social science subject is targeted to guide students to become democratic and responsible citizens of Indonesia, and peaceful world citizens.

The coverage of social studies subject in the Basic Framework and Structure of the Curriculum 2006 involves following aspects: (1) Human, Space, and Environment; (2) Time, Continuity, and Transformation; (3) Social and Cultural System; and (4) Economic and Welfare Behavior.

Since 2013, the social studies curriculum in Indonesia still exists in the Curriculum 2013 with some modifications going through fairly intense debate, especially about the status of social science subject in elementary school. In the Curriculum 2013, social studies subject for elementary school is not explicitly offered in grade 1, 2, and 3. Its delivery is thematically-integrated to other subjects, especially Pancasila (the Five Principles of National Life) and Civic Education (PPKn). Social studies subject in grade 4, 5, and 6 is a compulsory
subject (for Group A) 3 credit hours. The Curriculum 2013 uses thematic-integrated and scientific approach, including that for social studies subject. Nowadays, the implementation of the Curriculum 2013 has been started at a limited number of schools.

**ASEAN Community 2015**

*Association of South East Asia Nations* abbreviated as ASEAN is an organization established in 1967 that assembles countries in South East Asia and now it has 10 member countries. The members of ASEAN are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. There are two candidates of ASEAN member that currently still becomes observers, *i.e.* Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste. The main purpose of ASEAN is to improve the economy of member countries, and to ensure each other’s security and peace. The unification of nations as a united supremacy will defend them from conflict with the outsiders, even though this organization was initially created to prevent the spreading of communism in 1960s. As the assembly of allied and neighboring countries, ASEAN also make serious effort to grow and develop cultures starting ranging from sports up to literary concerns.

**What is ASEAN Community 2015?**

*The ASEAN Community* is a place for those 10 countries coexisting to build a better life for each of them. The existence of those countries is expected to give positive effect for each and make them stronger and more productive than on each own. To fulfill the expectations, each country ought to go through a range of routes leading them to the *ASEAN Community*. The foremost is **peace**, meaning that to find peace those 10 countries have to be cooperative in ensuring the safety of territory. They must not let ASEAN territory become the center of terrorists, hijackers, or drug dealers. ASEAN members must not engage in dispute among themselves, but they have to live in peace. **Secondly, welfare** means that together, they should benefit from their life with stronger economic advancement. ASEAN countries are able to attract investors, so that their business will grow and it provides more employment for all. It also creates various vacancies, such as those in health, farming, mine working, and some industry sectors, so that life quality of ASEAN Community will arise.

What do the generation of our nation need to do / prepare to cope with *ASEAN Community 2015*, especially in education sector and more specifically in social studies teaching and learning?

The answer for the question above is that we have to prepare superior
and competitive human resources because ASEAN Community is a part of global life demanding the contribution of global citizens. To create such quality of human resources, education becomes a strategic sector. Particularly on social studies teaching and learning, experts, practitioners, and “global reformers” have to produce a synergy in achieving social studies purpose through appropriate curriculum, especially the synergy between the results of need assessment and accurate decision making. Curriculum arranged is based on the result of assessment over community need and challenges faced by the nation.

In micro scale, especially in social studies teaching and learning, there are numerous approaches, strategies, methods, and even techniques of innovative teaching and learning process expected to be able to lead students to be good citizens with global conception. There are some recommendations from some experts (Mansbach, 1997; Merryfield, Jarchow, and Pickert, 1997; Diaz, Massialas, and Xanthopoulos, 1998; Cogan and Derricott, 1998; Riggs, 2002; Raley and Preyer, 2010) about the importance of providing global conception and / or perspective to students. Thus, students need to understand global problems through global education.

**What is global education?**

Global education is an endeavor designed to set up world conception or perspective to students by emphasizing that within human life, there is cultural correlation, as well as natural correlation on earth. Global education in social studies teaching and learning should be designed properly, so that students will possess critical thinking skills related to global matters that tend to be more characterized by pluralism, interdependence, and transformation. The goal of global education is to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to survive effectively. In school education curriculum in Indonesia, global education should be learned; it does not have to a separated subject, but it should be implemented through thematic and integrated approach. This condition cannot be put off considering world problems becoming more alarming, such as the lack of natural resources and marked by higher dependability of ethnical variety, cultural and life pluralism.

Some effects of technology progression, international trade, cultural exchange, tourism, environmental concern, market competition, scarcity of natural resources, and more intense weapon competition among superior countries are the portrayals of more complex condition of international society. The dependability among nations and countries results in a variety of cooperation in every aspect, as well as a range of competitions and conflicts.
For instance, economic cooperation motivates the modeling economic blocks among nations, such as in Europe with Economic Society of Europe, and in Asia Pacific with APEC. Due to technology advancement followed by gradual occurrence of problems, consciously or not, it also causes cultural impact or crash among nations.

**Global Issues for Social Studies Teaching and Learning**

Globalization is a process of escalation of human mobility, especially for mobile society that always moves from one house / place / city / or country to another (Riggs, 2002). This movement is not for a short period of time from one house to another, it may last for quite a long time. This phenomenon is a factor initiating new culture and life known as a global life. Moreover, it also triggers some issues/problems that have never been experienced or expected.

One of aspects to be learned by students is the understanding of global issues in various dimensions of life in global society. There are five major global issues in the context of relationship of interaction among people and / or countries as the unification of ASEAN, namely the problems of society and global environment; demography and diversity; economic and political challenges; values, skills, knowledge, and commitment; and information technology and research. These five major global issues have been presented by Keith Simkin in his lecture about two decades ago.

1. **Global Society and Environment**

Issues about society or citizen are human problems related to quality or quantity aspects. Central issues at the present or in the last few decades are about population, health, food, shelter, family, and even war and peace. Those are global problems not only for ASEAN community, but also for the rest of the world. Students, as future generation that will inhibit and manage this planet, need to understand them properly to make the right decision.

Global environment issues are being discussed, studied, and set as an agenda of the world by the UN. Some of the issues put forward are about the decrease of ozone layers, natural resources, and environmentally harmful construction. There is an underlying alteration about recent global tendency. According to Professor Jimly Asshiddiqie in his national seminar speech at Indonesia University of Education (2013), France is the country that claimed itself as the pioneer of the idea of upholding human rights in 1789, and now it amended its constitution by inserting a notion to protect the environment, so that it can claim itself as the pioneer of environmental protection through its constitution.
These days, many countries attempt to slot in environmental problem as a part of school education curriculum, or even set it up as one single subject. Australia, for example, has changed Social Studies subject into Social Education (1987) and since 1995 it has become Studies of Society and Environment subject (notice Curriculum Standard Framework / CSF, 1995, especially in the state of Victoria). In such a way, in Indonesia, a number of provinces / regions / or cities have issued a policy to include Pendidikan Lingkungan Hidup (PLH) or Environmental Education subject in school curriculum.

2. Demography and Social Diversity

Global Population Movement is a phenomenon occurring in global era, so that it becomes one of the indicators of globalization process. Interaction among the society of nations is inevitable. This intensive interaction implies an attitude over cooperation, competition, and even open or closed conflict. In ASEAN Community, such practical phenomenon is possible to occur. Thus, the process of understanding this phenomenon is necessary for all ASEAN members and should be held by each ASEAN member country, including Indonesia.

There needs to be a mutual understanding about local, national, or global culture among ASEAN society. Even if ASEAN member countries have ethnical similarities, there is a difference in cultural aspect, especially local and national cultures. For social studies teaching and learning, this condition implies that teachers ought to select materials, methods, models, teaching and learning media, and even evaluation system that support the growth of intercultural understanding within ASEAN society.

3. Economic and Political Challenges

To create a wealthy and prosperous ASEAN society, human resources need to be improved and moreover, they should be the priority of development for Indonesian government. The existence of world economic blocks should be anticipated, so that ASEAN society is able to keep upright and even make use of varied opportunities from another government’s global policy or INGO for its development. In anticipating uncertain economic changes, Indonesian manpower has to be prepared with various vocational skills and social studies teaching and learning has to be correlated to entrepreneurship skill. Besides, diplomatic skill for implementing foreign politics should be improved to build up our self-esteem in international scene.
4. Values, Skills, Knowledge, and Commitment

To co-survive in ASEAN Community 2015 properly, equally, and competitively, Indonesian society must have adequate preparation. Indonesian government has to arrange and line up a program for the development of intelligent, kind, skillful, and committed Indonesian human resources. To achieve this goal, social studies may contribute significantly through teaching and learning process. In this case, the position of social studies teachers is so vital that they need to develop their competencies constantly and continuously. It is expected that through standardized national education, including standardized teachers, curriculum, facilities and infrastructures, evaluation, teaching and learning process, and management, those expectations can be fulfilled. The Curriculum 2013 currently implemented is a form of expectation to actualize the existence of quality Indonesian society that is able to strive in global scheme for Gold Generation of Indonesia in 2045.

5. Information Technology and Research

In this global era, information technology plays an important role. Especially for social studies teaching and learning, teachers have to comprehend information technology properly and employ it as a medium to facilitate students for optimally developing their potential. In this information technology era, social studies teachers must be technology literate because it can assist the process of teaching and learning and achieving the objectives. If students have mastered information technology, those objectives can be achieved more easily. Likewise, technology mastery is also necessary to support research skill in scientific development. For us, research elements become demanding challenges.

Conclusion

That is the entire description on what and how social studies teaching and learning process deals with changes in the society, and specifically with the challenges from upcoming ASEAN Community 2015. The key of success of Indonesia to cope with ASEAN Community 2015 is the readiness of all people and government to prepare superior and competitive human resources. The necessary attempt is the process of developing human resource quality through education. Therefore, education must turn out to be the priority of development in Indonesia. Furthermore, the most strategic element of education is the development of teacher’s quality and commitment. Definitely, there are more to come, so that it would be much better to be discussed and explored.
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