

**IMPLEMENTATION OF FREE EDUCATION
IN RELATION TO SCHOOL MANAGEMENT
AT PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL 5 DENPASAR**

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ABSTRACT

The present study was intended to understand and deconstruct the ideology and reality hidden in the implementation of free education especially at Public Junior High School (SMPN) 5 Denpasar. The ideology appeared from the capitalistic world where a decision was made by the government to make education free of charge. Further, such a decision was issued when the general elections for the legislators and president were about to be held in 2009. It was this which inspired the writer to deconstruct the ideology and reality hidden in the decision made by the government to make education free of charge. The approach of cultural studies was employed in the present study. The informants were chosen using snow-ball technique, meaning that the longer the informants were determined, the more were involved. The data were collected using three techniques; they were observation, in-depth interview, and documentary study. Then the data collected were descriptively and qualitatively analyzed.

The result of the study showed that there was an ideology hidden in the policy made to make education free, that is, an attempt to attract people in such a way that they, through the elections for legislators and president held in 2009, would support those who were in the political superstructure. Consequently, their state of being established could be maintained. In addition, such a policy was made as part of the politics of image as an attempt to maintain the status quo.

Keywords: the policy of free education, ideology, power, and politics of image.

INTRODUCTION

In the situation in which the influence of capitalism was getting stronger, the government, in this case, the Ministry of National Education issued a policy that the parents of primary and junior high school students were freed from the school operating costs. This policy was prescribed in the circular of the Minister of National Education Number 186/MPN/KU/2008, dated 2 December 2008. It contrasted with what had been ideal before. The circular did not allow schools, except those under the categories of RSBI 'Rintisan Sekolah Berstandar Internasional' (the schools which were designed to be internationally standardized) and SBI 'Sekolah Berstandar Internasional' (the schools which were already internationally standardized), to levy operating costs on the students'

parents. Before the circular was issued, both the non RSBI and non SBI schools were financially supported by the students' parents. Such financial support was in the form of SPP 'Sumbangan Pembinaan Pendidikan' (school fees). However, after the circular was issued, the school management became restless as they were not able to carry out the school programs which had been previously planned.

What was interesting was that the policy was made when the election for president was about to be held, that is, in 2009. As a consequence, it was negatively interpreted by people. It seemed that the government was highly concerned about the people coming from the lower class. Actually, there was an ideology hidden in it. According to O'Neill (2001: 33), an ideology refers to a system of values or belief which is accepted as a fact or truth by particular groups of people. However, Althusser (in Takwin, 1984: xvi) affirms that an ideology is a belief which is unconsciously implanted. A study was conducted at Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri (Public Junior High School) 5 Denpasar, as one of the junior high schools in Denpasar City, to identify whether there was an ideology hidden in the policy issued to make education free or not.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study was planned to be a qualitative study. According to Iskandar (2008: 186) and Moleong (2007: 6), a qualitative study is intended to understand the phenomenon experienced by the subject under study. The informants in the present study were purposively determined; those who were chosen were those who were considered knowledgeable of the problems explored. The data were collected through observation, in-depth interview and documentary study. The data were descriptively and qualitatively analyzed in which the perspective of Miles and Huberman (1992: 15-21) was used as a reference.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the results of data analysis, it could be described as follows. *First*, there were several reasons why the policy of making education free of charge was issued by the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, one of which was sociological in nature. Sociologically, since a long time ago the Indonesian society had criticized the government that its responsibility for making education inexpensive all over the country was low. Such criticism was made based on what is prescribed in article 11 (1) of the Act Number 20/2003 concerning the National Educational System which

affirms that both the central government and local government should provide services and facilities, and guarantee that every citizen is equally entitled to quality education. In addition, in clause (2) of article 11, it is affirmed that both the central government and local government is obliged to prepare funds for carrying out education for every citizen who is seven to fifteen years old.

As the response to the criticism that educational costs are high, the government, in this case, the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, based on the Circular Number 186/MPN/KU/2008 dated 2 December 2008, issued a policy which was intended to support the school operating costs referred to as “dana BOS”. It was expected that the policy would relieve the financial burden of the students’ parents, especially those coming from the middle and lower classes.

The finding of the present study showed that such a policy did not allow the school management to levy dues on the students’ parents whatever the reason was as all the school operating costs had been budgeted by both the central government and local government. What is stated by Charles Lindblom (1968) is true that the public policy making is essentially a complex and analytical political process; when it starts and when it terminates are not known but the limits of the policy making process are clear. However, the policy made by the Minister of National Education based on the circular mentioned above seemed not to be maturely planned.

The other reason why the policy was made was political in nature. The result of data analysis showed that the policy which was issued to make education free of charge by the Minister of National Education seemed not to be maturely planned. The reason was that how much the funds allocated for BOS through the circular mentioned above was not determined through political and budgetary debates. How much the funds allocated for BOS were “too quickly determined”. In this context, it could be predicted that there was an ideology hidden in the policy. This was supported by the fact that the circular was issued when the elections for legislators and president were about to be held in 2009. This fact was ironic enough, as in accordance with what is stated by Mansur Fakhri (in the introduction to the Book written by William F. O’Neil entitled *Educational Ideologies* (2008: xvi), that, in critical perspective, education should make a critical reflection to socially transform the dominant ideology. The main responsibility of an educator is to prepare space for any critical attitude towards any unfair system and structure. Deconstruction and advocating should also be made to make the social system impartial.

Referring to the analysis of Freire concerning people's ideological consciousness and to the Balinese people's awareness in general, and the awareness of the people living in Ubung Sub district in particular, the understanding which could be established was that the ideological awareness to which the Balinese people adhered in general and to which the people living in Ubung Sub district adhered in particular were the magical awareness and the naive awareness. This proposition was developed in the present study for the following reasons. *First*, generally people just accepted every policy made by the government without making any attempt to understand what ideologies were possibly hidden in the policy. *Second*, they never criticized any policy made by the government, as, according to them, the prevailing system and structure were good; as a result, they found it unnecessary to question it and they preferred to search for what was possibly responsible for the problem by blaming themselves (naïve consciousness) or to search for what was possibly responsible for the problem outside themselves (both natural and supernatural).

The other reason was juridical in nature. When reformation started in 1998 in Indonesia, every Indonesian citizen proposed that every aspect of life be changed. What was initially expected by the Indonesian society at that time was the change in politics, economy, law, and cultural development. The political life in the previous era (read: the New Order era) was highly centralized; further, it tended to go to totalitarianism. The movement reformation expected that the government would be democratic and decentralized.

Second, there was one interesting finding which needs to be revealed in the present study. It was true that a policy was made to make education free in Public Junior High School 5 Denpasar; however, it was applied to the students coming from economically poor families. And the students coming from economically rich families were still obliged to pay for school fees to compensate for those which should have been paid for by the students coming from economically poor families. This model of policy, on one hand, was advantageous as the students coming from poor families could enjoy education as guaranteed by the prevailing law regulations. On the other hand, the fact that many students were still obliged to pay for school fees whereas others were not could not avoid the partial structure and system of learning process. The reason was that either consciously or unconsciously the teachers would pay more attention to the students who paid for school fees and pay less attention to those who did not. In such a

condition, the state, which maintained the discriminative and hegemonic system of education, should have deleted various forms of discrimination.

Third, one of the implications of the policy of making education free was that psychologically the students would not feel economically burdened; they would feel relieved during the learning process; in addition, their parents would not make any claim to the school management related to the quality of education their children enjoyed. The reason was that the parents felt that they were facilitated by the government through free education.

Fourth, the policy of making education free could also cause people to have permissive attitude to the schooling system. The reason was that when people felt that they were not economically burdened, they might consider that the matters pertaining to their children's education were entirely the responsibility of the government, in this case, the schools where their children went to. As a result, people paid no attention to the matters pertaining to education especially to the matters pertaining to the quality of education. It was not surprising, therefore, that the quality of education in Indonesia was worse than the quality of education in other countries, including Singapore.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on what was discussed above, there were several reasons which caused the government to issue the policy of making education free starting from the academic year 2008/2009. The *first* reason was sociological in nature; it was stated that since a long time ago the Indonesian society had criticized that education was extremely expensive in Indonesia. The *second* reason was juridical in nature; it was stated that the matters pertaining to educational costs, especially those levied in the basic level of education, in accordance with the 1945 Constitution and the Act Number 20/2003, were the responsibility of both the central government and local government. The *third* reason, which was political in nature, was that the policy of making education free was actually an ideology; the ruler desired to maintain the prevailing system and structure.

The policy of making education free in Public Junior High School 5 Denpasar was implemented for one academic year, that is, the academic year 2009/2010; it was applied to all students regardless of their families. Then, starting from the academic year 2010/2011 the school management levied school fees on the students' parents amounting to Rp. 50,000.00 (fifty thousand rupiahs) per month based on the agreement entered into by the school management and the school committee. The reason was that

the funds given by both the central government and local government in the form of BOS were insufficient to fund what was required to operate school.

It turned out that the policy of making education free which was implemented starting from the academic year 2008/2009 had several implications on the students themselves, the learning process in the class room and the public. The implications of the policy of making education free could be classified into three; they are: psychological and sociological implications, and the implication on the students' learning motivation. Psychologically, the policy of making education free could negatively affect the non-physical aspect of the students especially those coming from economically rich families. Sociologically, the implementation of the policy of making education free could cause the social relationship between the teachers and students and the social relationship between the rich students and poor ones to be negative.

It is suggested that the school management should pay attention to the economic condition of those coming from the lower class so that their children will be able to enjoy education to which they are entitled as prescribed by the prevailing law regulations. It is also suggested to the teachers that they should behave impartially to the students; the students coming from rich and poor families should be impartially treated.

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