

Integrated Curriculum and Instruction based on Local Wisdom in Sekolah Alam Bengawan Solo (SABS): An Innovation in the Implementation of Character Education

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ABSTRACT

Society and schools as the main agents of education must carry out innovations and creative methods in instructional processes in order to give their supports to the implementation of character education that has been launched by the Indonesian government through the Indonesian Ministry of Education. As an attempt to implement the character education in the instructional process, Sekolah Alam (nature-based school) Bengawan Solo (SABS) integrates the instructional process with environmental issues based on local wisdom. The curriculum developed by SABS has the holistic characteristics including: 1) character; 2) knowledge; 3) leadership; 4) entrepreneurship; and 5) an environmental insight. The instructional process in SABS has five main objectives: 1) fostering physical and mental health; 2) building a fighting spirit; 3) developing students' critical thinking; 4) building perseverance; and 5) encouraging a simple life style. The social and cultural issues related to the Javanese and Islamic culture that take place in the community in the surrounding SABS are also taken into consideration by integrating themes related to the issues in the instructional process.

Keywords: local wisdom; sekolah alam; nature-based school; integrated instructional process; character education

INTRODUCTION

The sixth edition of *Biografi*, a magazine issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, issued on April 2011 took up “Preparing the Golden Generation” as its theme. It was for a purpose of drawing Indonesian people’s attention to realize the importance of a good education for the generations of the nation so that by 2045, 100 years after Indonesia declared its independence, Indonesia will has its best generation leading the nation. As a vision, it is very good to be appreciated while, on the other hand, Indonesian people are facing a variety of complex problems in many areas ranging from politics, economics, law, and culture as many mass media reported from time to time. Those myriad of problems that seemed endless put the optimism of Indonesian people to the test in terms of whether they can bring the vision of “*Indonesia Emas*” in 2045 into reality. To bring the vision into reality, we must bridge the gap between the vision and reality that seemed not in line with the vision. A close examination toward those problems shows that the main root of the problems is the quality of education in Indonesia that is not in good quality.

The number of politicians who are not honest in performing their duties is just one of many examples of the education process carried out in schools in Indonesia has not been able to build a good leadership. We can examine it from two sides: first, the inability of society to put people with a good character as a politician, which means that people are not able to identify a good figure: second, it shows the failure of the educational process which does not successfully educate the student to become an honest politician. A survey in terms of the poverty and unemployment level by the Indonesian Central Statistic Agency (*BPS*) as cited in sindonews.com also shows another surprising fact. It shows the data of the Indonesian poverty rate is 28.51 million (11.13% of total population) per September 2015, an increase of seven hundred and eighty thousand inhabitants compared to the previous year. The high number of poverty rate is another evidence of the failure in the education process as the education process is unable to develop a generation that can solve social problems in the community.

These problems are getting more complex as the Indonesian people and the government have not successfully sought a solution to solve the problems.

Government programs keep changing from time to time due to the changing periods of leadership. It is often filled with political pragmatism. In addition, Indonesian people themselves are not really concerned in solving the problems. All of this roots from the quality of the education of those people are not very good that leads them to the inability to function as controllers of government performance. Why does the problem occur? It is because of the chosen representatives themselves do not successfully functions as the true representative of the people.

In regards of those phenomena, it is necessary for the community to actively participate seeking for the solution. It also necessary to identify the problems in the local level. It is not appropriate if the people simply hand over every problem in the society to the government while the government themselves are also in the middle of the complex situation for their power infrastructure and human resources are also full of "diseases" such as corruption, collusion and nepotism (KKN). Thus, the *Sekolah Alam Bengawan Solo (SABS)* was established as a form of *ijtihad* (effort) of a small group of young generations in order to serve the motherland in supporting the Indonesia's vision towards "*Indonesia Emas*". Concerning in education, SABS brings an integrated curriculum model based on local wisdom to implement character education that has been launched by the government through the Indonesian Ministry of Education out.

DISCUSSION

Sekolah Alam Bengawan Solo

According to Harry Santosa (2015), a fatal mistake that most parents and educators in this era has done is when they are reluctant to contemplate and reflect on their own nature, mission and ideal vision of education associated with the purpose of creation and life's mission as described in the Quran surah Ar-Ruum verse 30.

30. Then set your face upright for religion in the right state-- the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know--

It results in school systems and the student's parent's habit that tend to organize educational activities without a clear vision. As a result, children graduate from school without a well-developed character. They become a small-minded person, do not have a clear vision of what the purpose of their life is, get confused about what their roles and interests actually are, do not have critical thinking skill, have inadequate maturity and self-contained level, do not have noble character, and do not have the social and nature environment awareness. It is contrary to what Allah says in the Quran and Prophet Muhammad decreed that children are individuals with great potential role of nature and destiny that Allah has set. If the generation of a nation does not grow according to Allah's outline and makes mischief in the earth instead, who is responsible?

However, the process of education carried out by Muslim today are driving the pupils away from the guidance of Allah. It is reflected in the dominance of subjects taught at schools, including Islamic-based schools, that are, mostly, rooted in the philosophy of materialism with atheistic tendency. Added to this, the ongoing curriculum in the country tend to have homogeneous pattern for it is the central government who makes the decision for the whole area of the nation.

Due to the social and domestic problems in the society and the loss of community care towards their own culture, the young people in the village grow up without any guidance, either from their parents or the public figures in the society. In addition to moral issues, young people are also afflicted with work aversion, many young people who are in the productive age are unemployed. Meanwhile, formal educational institutions such as schools seem do not have any concerned about the problems the society facing.

Therefore *Sekolah Alam Bengawan Solo (SABS)* was founded as an alternative school that offers an educational process which is bounding-free . SABS established in 2011 in the form of a formal primary schools based on the government regulations. However, the SABS ventured to do many innovations in the learning activity, as will be described in the next part of this chapter.

Innovation in terms of curriculum in Sekolah Alam Bengawan Solo (SABS)

If we take a look at engineering, we will see things like materials engineering, design, system, and many other techniques of which purpose is to ease human's task. The same thing is also there when we take a look into the science of education. Education is a higher-level engineering about how to help young people to develop themselves into a perfectly-developed-human being. In order to bring the idea into reality, it is necessary to have a profound understanding about human being.

Sekolah Alam Bengawan Solo (SABS), as the name suggests, bring the concept of nature as the point of departure in the education process. SABS develops their curriculum based on their very own character and carry out an innovative and integrated instructional process while at the same time they also follow the government regulation. The innovations are based on the ideas of education figures whose ideas are out of the box and have contributed in empowering community-based education.

Further, the idea of education that SABS has initiated is an attempt to bring back the educational model which has been developed by moslem intellectuals in their madrasah. Syamsul Kurniawan and Erwin Mahrus (2011) describes the ideas of moslem intellectuals in the field of education from time to time from various ideologies. In general, all of the intellectuals agree that education should be organized to develop a perfectly-developed human being (*insan kamil*) in accordance with the nature of Allah's creation of man. This is in line with the purpose of Allah creating the spirit and mankind that is to do the service and worship to Allah of which the implementation is to be a caliph (representative of God) on earth.

Following are the principles of the curriculum that SABS has developed.

A. Character

SABS give the highest priority to the cultivation of the student's morals. It is an integral part in the integration of providing students with religious experiences as all of the students in SABS are moslem. For the SABS, the

instructional process about Islam is not carried out as a particular subject, instead, it is integrated with every activity performed by students. In addition, the homework given to the students emphasize more on the formation of good habits and positive social interactions, for examples, helping parents do the dishes, cooking, cleaning the bathroom, and likewise. Assignments related to the social activity in the society are also given periodically.

B. Knowledge

As any other schools in general, SABS also develop student's cognitive intelligence. Thus, the subjects outlined by the government are also in the curriculum. However, the instructional process of those subjects are not carried out in different ways from the other school in general. In SABS, students learning those subjects are engaged in inquiry-based activities in the form of, for examples, games and field activities. Instead of having students memorizing what is in the book, SABS engages students in the learning activities that require them to sharpen their reasoning skill.

C. Leadership

The leadership curriculum developed by SABS has the holistic characteristic. Students are educated to not only ready to be a leader, but also to be the one who is being led. Some of the activities of which purpose is to develop student's leadership and teamwork are outbound activity, class outing, and nature tour.

D. Entrepreneurship

From the first grade, SABS students are trained to live independently in accordance with the level of their ability. Entrepreneurship curriculum developed by SABS emphasizes that the students must realize the importance of independence and entrepreneurship. Class outing, nature exploration, and other activities that require them to bring their own pocket money are used as a trigger for shaping student's entrepreneurial skill. Students are also engaged in simulation of the real-world activity to give them a big picture of how their parents earn for their living. Some of

the activities are having weekly market in the school and having a short time apprenticeship.

E. Environmental Insight

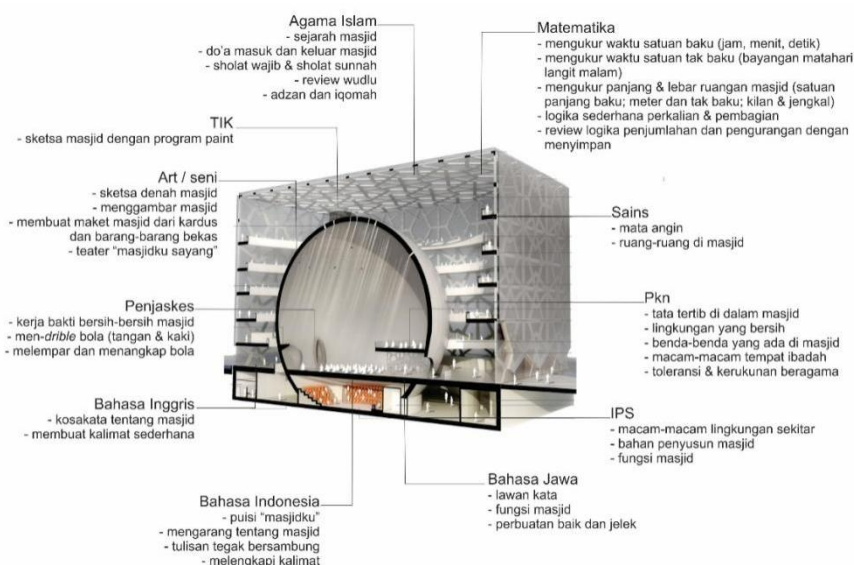
As a school that makes use natural environment as the core area of the instructional process, students are taught how to love nature. The purpose of the curriculum on environmental insight is to raise student's environmental awareness.

In addition, as school located in the Javanese culture environment, SABS also takes part in preserving local culture especially the ones that are closely related with children's world such as Javanese language, traditional games, traditional songs, and any other forms of traditions that are not in contrary to Islam. the purpose of this activity is to keep the student's aware of their ancestor culture.

The Model of the Integrated Instructional Process in Sekolah Alam Bengawan Solo

In the instructional process, SABS applies thematically-organized instruction. For one academic year, there are six major themes. Time allocation for each theme is 1,5 – 2 months. The students and facilitators are involved in choosing the themes. The themes are taken from things the students encounter in their living and school environment such as housing, market, grave, river, and likewise. The chosen themes become the stepping stone for the lesson planning process. The facilitators plan the instructional activities that are relevant with the characteristics of SABS and the national curriculum applied in Indonesia.

Following is the spider-web diagram for the lesson plan.



Picture 1

The Spider-Web Diagram for Grade 2 – Theme: Mosque

In general, the purpose of the instructional process in SABS are as follow. Fostering student's physical and mental health. Learning activities which aims to foster student's physical and mental health are outbound, exploring natural environment, and a class outing. Building student's fighting spirit. The learning activities organized usually aim to meet particular additional learning targets. It helps in building student's endurance and fighting spirit. Developing student's critical thinking skill. Learning activities that develop student's critical thinking skill are usually associated with a real problem, especially for the learning of mathematics. Students are not only engaged in paper work only, but also engaged in real-world simulation such as games, gardening activities, surveys, or buying and selling simulation for the entrepreneurship program. Building perseverance. The activity that is organized to build student's perseverance is gardening. It aims to arise student's affection toward nature as well as engages students in experiencing how to keep plants of God's creation. Encouraging simple lifestyle. Establishment of simple lifestyle becomes one of the learning targets in SABS. This is part of the curriculum on character building. Students are trained to refrain from

being a compulsive person. According to Emha Ainun Najib, living a simple lifestyle is a form of fasting in the real life and should be a way of life in order to follow the Prophet Muhammad.

Teachers in SABS are called as facilitators. Their role are not only facilitating student's learning process but also being a partner for student's parents for 7/24 in assisting the SABS student's learning process. Thus, the facilitators dedicate themselves to keep learning from time to time so that they can be a good consultant for their student's parents. It becomes one of the main concerns that SABS want to convey to the society that family is the first place for a child education while schools and society are main supporters. This is to reduce what has been already embedded in the public mind that the school is the place for everything related to the education of their children.

Efforts made by the SABS are in line with Toto Rahardjo (2014) that a school is neither a place to mould bricks nor a place to compete. Every family is supposed to bear in their mind a vision that is based on the nature of the creation mankind by Allah as described by Harry Santosa (2015) so that children are growing in accordance with what Allah has ruled.

CONCLUSION

Sekolah Alam Bengawan Solo (SABS) is a form of an effort to achieve the nation's goal. Out there, there are many other Indonesian people who have been taking action to improve the quality of education in Indonesia for they care about the quality of education of the nation. Moreover, this effort is part of a growing movement of which purpose is to restore the Muslim educational process to the one that is accordance with the nature of the creation of mankind by Allah, so that the future generations of Islam emerged as a mercy to the universe.

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