



Teachers, or *gurus*, are at the heart of education. To ensure that their quality is good, is a must for our nation. (Photo courtesy of the Embassy of Denmark)

Commentary: Quality of Indonesian Teachers and Their Beliefs

BY : KUNTO NURCAHYOKO
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Teachers, or *gurus*, are at the heart of education. Among other factors, such as facilities, curriculum and social support, their quality determines the quality of education. To ensure that this quality is good, is a must for our nation.

In Javanese, a guru is someone who must be *digugu* (obeyed) and *ditiru* (imitated). In Sanskrit, "guru" means a teacher. In Hinduism, the word symbolizes the shrine of science and knowledge. Essentially, guru is a professional educator, whose primary tasks are: educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing and evaluating students. These tasks are what makes the profession so important for the progress of a nation.

However, there are still many problems with teachers in Indonesia. According to Safruddin Abduk Jabar, there are at least six challenging issues: some teachers teach subjects outside their areas of expertise; their qualifications are insufficient; they lack in competence; there is no program for teachers' professional development; teacher-recruitment system is flawed; teachers are unequally distributed across the country.

Our government needs to start mitigating the risk factors that hinder educational goals. One of the keys to improve the success of classroom learning lies in teachers' perspective on education, or "teachers' beliefs."

Teachers' Beliefs

As argued by psychologist Albert Bandura, beliefs, more than truth, guide individual goals, emotions, decisions, actions and reactions. Therefore, discussing teachers' belief is essential in educational discourse. M. Frank Pajares adds that the teachers' beliefs is their perspective on what is considered right or wrong. Each teacher has different beliefs about many things, especially with



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learning activities (policies, poverty, economy, etc).

Beliefs and behaviors of teachers in the process of teaching are manifested by the use of teaching techniques, selection of teaching materials, teacher-student interaction, assessment, and classroom activities. Because teachers fully participate in their teaching environment, classrooms are managed in accordance with their beliefs.

An illustration: teachers who believe that knowledge is delivered through a construction process (*constructivist belief*) will teach in ways that make their students learn from various sources. Collaboration and cooperation will dominate the process, while the teachers will only act learning facilitators. On the other hand, if teachers believe that knowledge is delivered through direct transmission, they will make students more focused on their own explanations. Learning materials will be based solely on what the teachers choose and prefer to use.

The teachers' beliefs is also very important in building the students' discipline, mutual respect and moral values. The teachers' beliefs will shape the learning environment and influence learning motivation. The success of the whole learning process highly depends on these beliefs.

Indonesian teachers should have these beliefs to serve in achieving the national education goals. They should be encouraged to construct their understanding and perception that learning in the classroom is essential in fostering the students' active and creative participation.

Values of the 1945 Constitution and *Pancasila* should be incorporated into teaching techniques and learning materials for the students to become intelligent and tolerant individuals. Students must be taught to be part of a larger community and understand the values, norms and social roles of a democratic and multicultural nation. Teachers must be able to let the students practice the principles of social justice nurture the habit of carrying out positive discussions.

Unfortunately, many teachers believe their profession is merely a job. To become a certified teacher, a civil servant, becomes their ultimate goal. This is dangerous, as the real goal of education and their students' achievements become less important. Therefore, we need programs to revitalize the teachers' beliefs.

This can be done through an intensive training when the prospective teachers are still studying at their respective institutions of higher education.

Teacher recruitment and teacher training should involve assessment mechanisms in a form of psychological tests interviews or microteaching. By looking at what they believe, the recruitment process will allow to assess their quality and competences before they enter the real classrooms.

Ongoing monitoring and improvement of competence through workshops or training should be made regularly, so that the teachers' beliefs could follow scientific and technological developments as well.

By possessing positive teachers' beliefs, Indonesian teachers will be worth being called as "those who should be digugu and ditiru."

Kunto Nurcahyoko is a social activist and English language lecturer at Pamane Talino Teaching College in West Kalimantan.



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