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# Curriculum 2013: The next oasis or mirage?

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The Jakarta Post

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Like a dreadful desert, our education system is now grappling with the extreme heat of distrust and a massive famine of hope. The results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009, shows that Indonesian education is ranked 66th out of 74 participating countries in reading, mathematics and science.

Despite the perpetual endeavors administered by our government, education seems to be progressing very slowly.

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This curriculum was officially launched on July 13 starting with first, fourth, seventh and 10th graders. The very reason to justify such implementation of the new curriculum is because the ministry wants to restore character education and improve students'™ creative thinking.

Under this curriculum, Education Minister M. Nuh claimed at least three benefits. First, this curriculum determines the passing competences standard (SKL) in the beginning then the subjects'™ requirement.

That said '” students will know what to expect in their learning before going to class. Second, this curriculum also offers the continuously-related competences on all level of grades.

Lastly, this curriculum uses a more holistic approach for the learning process based on students'™ creativity.

It is worth noting that from the 10 different curriculum implemented since 1947, the 2013 curriculum innovates the approach by implementing a fully integrated thematic approach.

Hence, one single textbook will be discussed among different subjects especially in grade one up to three of elementary school.

The idea is basically to enable early young students to frame their knowledge as a holistic system rather than separate entities.

This new curriculum will also cut off some subjects. Previously, elementary school students for example, used to have 10 subjects and now they have only six subjects for grade one to three and eight subjects from grade four to six.

This regulation is expected to reduce the overwhelming burden borne by students. Yet, this is quite paradoxical considering the additional hours will add more to the workload.

In order to reach the target in such a limited time, the ministry will create syndicate-like training for the teachers. They will assign national instructors who will be in charge to train the core teachers from each province. These core teachers will eventually train target teachers from each school.

While the supporting arguments for the 2013 curriculum seem to be appealing, lots of people still do not believe in this new curriculum due to the rush. Some educational

experts are even afraid of its long-term sustainability as this curriculum was relatively short in its development.

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The dissemination of this curriculum through the ministry's website simply showed its draft without involving extensive input or feedback from the public.

The Jakarta Post article by Zulfa Sakhiyya on Feb. 23, 2013, discussed a one-size-fits-all syllabus to ensure the uniformity of instruction for teachers.

Unfortunately, this step will potentially jeopardize teachers'™ creativity. The book and curriculum have been fully set up by central government. Having said that, this curriculum will value the individuality and local context of learning less.

People are skeptical of the significance of the new curriculum because the previous curriculums insignificantly boost up the quality of our education.

Yet, we need to understand that education is a complex system, which involves a lot of elements. Putting the blame solely on the curriculum regarding the bad quality of education is like putting the blame on vehicle manufacturers for traffic jams. The question now is: 'What is curriculum?'

A curriculum is an extensive plan of teaching and learning that guides students to interact with instructional content, materials, resources and processes for the attainment of educational objectives.

Again, although curriculum is an essential element in determining the education quality, there are other factors that we should consider like teachers'™ professionalism, supporting society and environment, as well as media.

It is impossible to achieve high quality education by solely depending on a good curriculum without the support of those other factors.

According to Nation and Macalister, a curriculum should involve theoretical and practical consideration such as learners'™ prior knowledge and lacks, the resources available including time, skill of the teachers, the principle of teaching and learning, and the existing environment such as society and media.

These factors are needed to construct effective and efficient course design.

Considering the importance of a supporting system from so many factors, society has a duty to be actively involved in the process of education. One of the ways is to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum.

It sounds overwhelming but this is feasible. The ministry should provide an education

drop box that will allow people to have their comments and findings heard. This channel is particularly important especially for parents and teachers.

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We cannot deny that the implementation of 2013 curriculum has some drawbacks. But we must not be indifferent toward the global change that requires adjustment on our education system.

A quality education is not only determined by the curriculum, but it is also inextricably related to public awareness and involvement toward education process.

The quality of teachers and well-integrated supports from media and society are also essential anchors for our education.

Eventually, education is like an infinite path. If we imagine a desert, the new curriculum can be an oasis or mirage depending on where we stand.

But again, with tremendous efforts from all parties, we can turn that elusive mirage into a flourishing oasis.

The writer is an Ohio State University graduate majoring in Second and Foreign Language Education.

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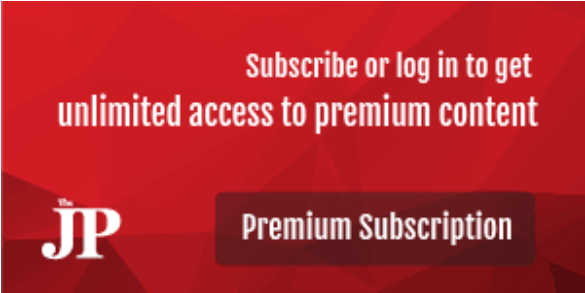
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