

Education without Borders: Equal Opportunity for Learning

If we are reflecting on the portrait of education in Indonesia, it can be said that the education system is still far from what it should be. The education system, as it is developed at this time, is still interpreted in a very narrow sense. It is still limited to the understanding that education means teaching and learning activities in a formal way which is bounded by classrooms, age group, and financial capability. Most teachers and students assume that learning activities can only be done in the classroom, so that those who do not have access to schools cannot obtain education. Similarly, those who do not meet the age requirements or norms, they do not have access to educational facilities. Finance also often becomes a major issue, because most people who are not able to pay for school tuitions therefore cannot attain an education. These misconceptions of the possible definition of education will continue to have implications as to the nature of education itself, which in turn will impact the achievement of educational goals.

Education is a substantial matter for man, as it exists in almost every aspect of man's life. It is a result of interaction between individuals, and their social and physical environment. For an individual, education is a process of self-maturation and development. That learning process occurs throughout man's life and these learning resources can come in many different forms. At the level of national development, alongside health, education is a top objective. Education can also be seen as a vital component of growth and development. Of what Michael Todaro, an economist and a pioneer in the field of development economics, stated that education plays a key role in the ability of a developing country to absorb modern technology and to develop the capacity for self-sustaining growth and development. Therefore, equal access to education for every element of society is indispensable, especially to support the overall national development.

Education, in the future which I imagine, is education available to everyone. Every member of society has a right to education, so any member of society should be able to obtain educational resources anytime and anywhere. The concept of school or education without borders can be developed today as an alternative to mainstream educational facilities. School without borders, or also called "learning centers" is not restricted by the concepts of classrooms, age group, and financial capability. People can come to the learning centers without being

afraid of spatial, age, and financial boundaries. Moreover, education should also appreciate individual freedom of expression. In this case, education should be authentic and developed based on the social capital owned by a certain community. There is no one size fits all, thus different education systems should adjust to what is needed by the society. Thus, educational outcomes can be used to solve problems and develop society toward improvement.

In Indonesia, Papua is one example of a region that lags behind in terms of educational quality. The lack of educational resources is also compounded by social and geographical conditions which renders incentives to attain education ineffective. Nevertheless, governments still come with a set of broad conclusions. Instead, they actually should draw some lessons which are simple yet powerful, and keep in mind that small changes can have great effects. These powerful small changes are something that I will help effect, together with my friends, to enhance education in Papua. The concept of formal education cannot work there; instead, school without borders is an alternative that can be more accepted by Papuan society. There, we will build a learning center called *"Kitorang Pung Rumah Belajar"*, in which people of different age groups can come at flexible times. They do not have to worry with the concept of uniforms, shoes and strict school hours which are inherent in formal education. Besides, the curriculum for this learning center developed in accordance with the capacity of local communities. For example, if a community has great capacity in fishery, then they are given more knowledge about fishery, in addition to other basic knowledge. Thus, we are working with already existing cultural practices and norms, and not using a blanket approach existing in formal education.

Hopefully for now, and further ahead, education is not only viewed from formal and spatial perspectives, but rather as substantial coherence between individuals, social and physical environments. Education is not only about how the system works, but also should be understood as something that is without limit, that is without spatial, age, and financial boundaries. Moreover, education is an essential element that encompasses man's life. Hence, the way people perceive education will result in a paradigm formation of how education integrates with the nature of life itself.