

Teachers' Union Demands and Prospects of Teachers in the Globalization Era

Soeganda Priyatna

ABSTRACT

In Indonesian society, teacher has a unique position, beside as knowledge, perception, attitude, ehviour transferor also as a role model to the society. It is more than an evolutionary modernization; globalization has touched almost every aspects of life fantastically and jointly, shook every cultural foundations, roots and national defense. Together with family and society, teacher is an institution which tries to control them. In reality, teacher is expected to give his or her biggest effort compared to the other two. On the other hand, teacher burden felt harder from time to time in an artificial, economic oriented and marginalizing noble values society. Teacher is losing their prestige whereas teacher is also expected to be a multidimension person in this third millennium. Can the teacher fight for his or her right to live properly through a solid fight? Can the society accept the reality that as worker, teacher also has the right to build and become a member of a worker union? ILO Convention ratification four years ago showed that teacher is allowed to start his or her own worker union. Teacher's Union must be a promoter to the development of teacher's social economic status and professionalism and to push trade unionism to be a social movement.

Introduction

In the third millennium or the 21st century, the world is changing rapidly along with the process of globalization occurring all over the world. Globalization is facilitated by the development of communication technology and transportation in all aspects.

Free market economy sneaks to every corner of the globe forced by not only economic power but also political and cultural power. All of those lead people all over the world to a global culture that can shake cultural and national values and pillars. We, people of Indonesia and Malaysia, have experienced the impacts of the [globalization's] influence on the highly-respected values of our culture. Young generation are affected more by western values than their own cultural values. Very often, such values are contra-

dictory to the values of our culture: pre-marital sex, for example, becomes a common thing because it is bombarded by mass-media such as newspaper/magazines or by the more powerful media such as films and televisions.

Along with families and societies, teachers are among the institutions that socialize cultural values to the younger generation and at the same time function as the pillars that prevent them from the influence that can endanger the values. However, in reality, teachers are expected far too much for safeguarding the values than the other two institutions. Teachers, in Bahasa Indonesia 'guru' is often interpreted as 'digugu' (be listened to) and 'ditiru' (be imitated).

How to Deal with the Rapid Changes

More than evolutionary modernization, globalization sweeps all aspects of life rapidly and

simultaneously (Priyatna, 1996:62). John Naisbitt in his book *Global Paradox* suggests that to deal with globalization, we have to “think locally, act globally”. In reality, the magic words don’t work easily!

We can wait for the changes. Then we will receive the reality that we can’t change or prevent what is going on. We can pretend not to be aware of the changes. We will lose the spirit to face the future, be pessimistic and refuse to believe that everything will change. Then we will panic when changes have become part of our life. We can accept the reality as it is, then we can get rid of the highly-respected values of our culture and replace them with the new values that go along with the demands of globalization. If we do that, we will be deceiving ourselves in believing that we can achieve what we want. What we don’t know is that such dismissal will lead us to the fall of our morality and culture as well as the national strength.

Can’t we think of an anticipation to changes based on today’s reality as the product of the latest evolution to achieve and to color the future. We can look at the future with care and take a distance from the mere dream: building and not destroying, working and not giving in to the ‘fate’.

In this globalization’s era, the demands on teachers are getting heavier because people are more economic oriented, super artificial, individualistic and put aside values. We are aware of the situation that has caused teachers to lose their prestige. Even more worrying is the fact that ‘social disproportion’ and deviance have sneaked into the classrooms. Another thing that has to be considered is that modern information and communication societies tend to lead to the strengthening of ‘inequalities’.

According to Nicol, ACEID (1995:218), “[F]rom the perspective of teachers, status is powerfully linked to notions of professional responsibility and professional autonomy”, which is depicted more in details in the Scheme 1.

Expected Educational System

To anticipate changes based on the reality and to apply the strategies to achieve modern so-

cieties that still respect cultural values requires educational system that is strict but flexible, actual but still takes into account social norms and values.

The educational system expected is education based on equalities that develops democracy and participation, education that offers and creates equal opportunities, education that erases social, cultural as well as financial gap. Such educational system will take the attention of pupils and students and connect them to their environment and needs. This kind of education should be applicable to both children, talented students, backward or disabled students, as well as mature students. The educational system we need is the one wherein equalities and democracy will situate whatever differences among students as enrichment and materials for development of educating values, social behavior and personalities of students. We also need an educational system that will provide real compulsory education the way in which it gives rights to access to information technology and social skills.

To control such a system, teachers are expected to improve their quality both in the implementation of their functions as well as in the quality of their welfare.

The functions of teachers are to transfer knowledge, skills as well as perception, attitude and behavior. In the future, a teacher must be a multi-dimension person. (Roels, ACT Conference, 1998: 6). A teacher must be a paedagog, didactic, educator as well as a person who understands psychology, technology, sociology and even entrepreneurship. According to Jonathan Shaw, also in ACT Conference in Bangkok in 1998:

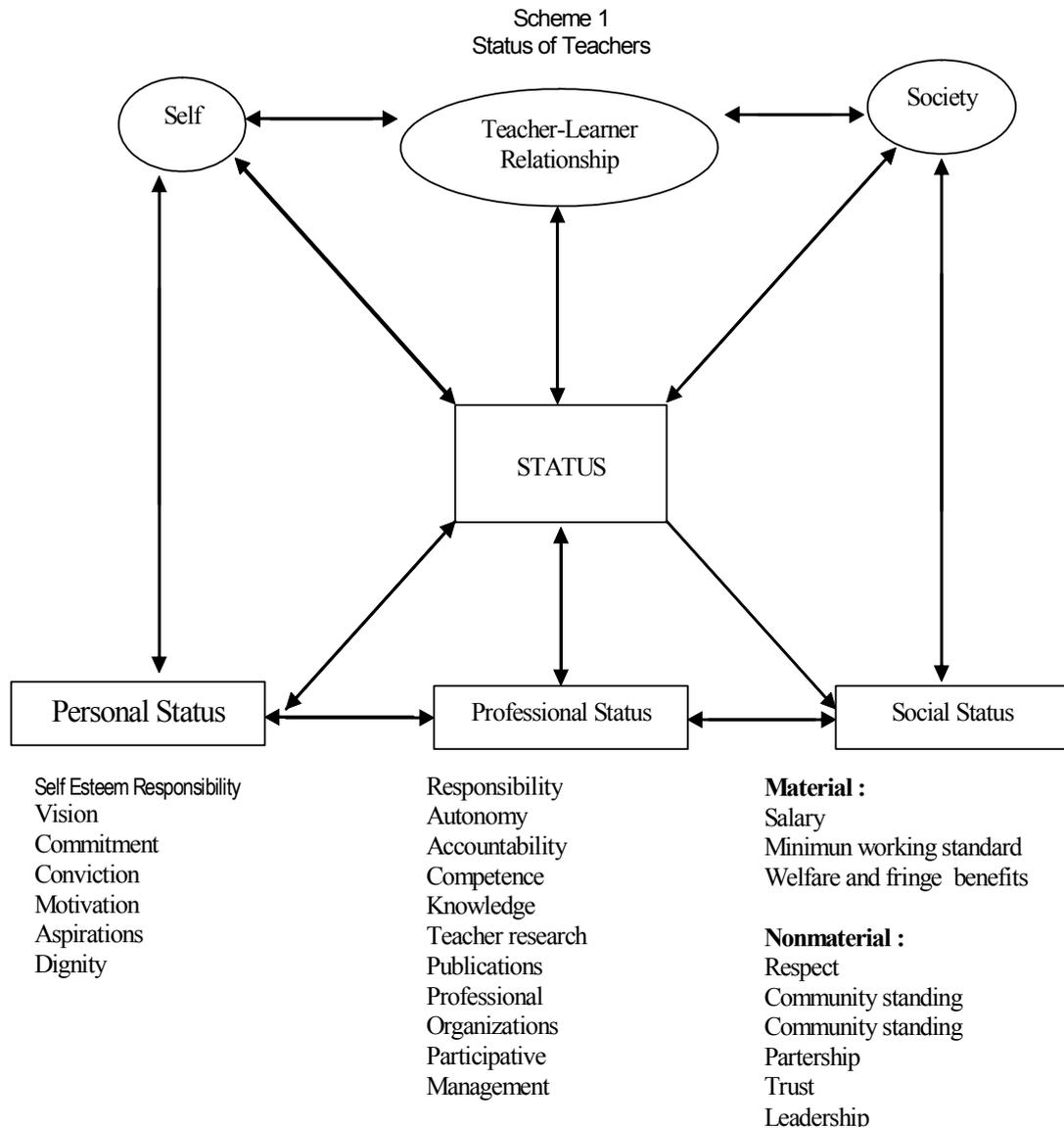
The major challenges confronting teachers in the 21st century therefore emerge from the increasing obsolescence and conservatism of formal educational systems, and the probability that these will not fundamentally change, and paradoxically, from increasing acknowledgement that teachers have key roles to play in enabling societies to respond to the megatrend.

‘Megatrend’ meant here is as reported by

Delors Commission in *Learning: Treasure Within*. In this report, the trends that have big impacts on educations are:

technologies.

5. Transformation of development models from “all-for economic growth” to sustainable hu-



1. Globalization on human activities.
2. Democratization in the political arena.
3. Commoditization/marketization of education.
4. Revolution of information and communication
5. man development.
6. Cultural values.
7. Population growth.

Teachers' Rights as Workers

Above we have discussed the position of teachers in the era of globalization. One of the most difficult burden for teachers in Indonesia especially those working in private schools and/or those working on honorarium terms is how they can earn proper salary equivalent to the obligation imposed on them. A significant number of private school teachers receive salary that is even below the regional minimum wages. Likewise, teachers working on honorarium terms in state-owned schools also experience the same condition. It is with sorrow and pain that we find a teacher working in state-owned school earning only Rp 200,000/month, less than a third of regional minimum wage.

How can we improve the dignity and performance of a teacher in such economic backward condition? The inherent problem is that it is still considered taboo for teachers to demand for salary increase, even more to found a union and hold a strike.

There should be efforts on the part of the government to help private school teachers and honorarium teachers because at any rate they are responsible for the education of a significant number of students. The following is the comparison of the ratio of teachers-students in private and state-owned schools.

World Confederation of Teachers in the introduction to the ACT Conference in Bangkok in 1997 suggested that:

Table 1
The Comparison of The Ratio of Teachers-Students
in Private and State-Owned Schools.

	State-owned schools	Private schools
Students	32,549,652	14,276,534
Teachers	1,517,764	552,091

Source: The Ministry of Education and Culture

The comments of all the branches of the teaching profession in all regions are unanimous in affirming that the teachers' status has not improved

since the ILO/UNESCO recommendation of 1996; many of them contend it has even deteriorated.

Of course, teachers are not very happy about it. Whilst the demands imposed on them are becoming heavier, their working condition, including their salary, is not improving. Common opinion suggests that "the higher level of the salary will be reflected in the better status of teachers and better education in society". As workers, teachers are supposed to have workers' basic rights as contained in the constitution and regulation on manpower as follows:

1. The rights to job opportunity without any discrimination.
2. The rights to training and skills.
3. The rights to choose jobs.
4. The rights to proper livelihood.
5. The rights for freedom to establish union and the rights to protection.
6. The rights to set a working agreement or industrial agreement.
7. The rights to strike.
8. The rights to social, health and work-safety.
9. The rights for freedom from forced labour.
10. The rights for proper working condition.

If we compare the burden, the working condition and the reward/salary the teachers receive, we feel that it is time teachers in Indonesia, as their counterparts in Malaysia, founded a real trade union. Why a 'real trade union'? The fact is the trade union that has been around for a long time and has millions of members such as PGRI (Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia) is more of a political organization rather than a trade union. PGRI has never had a Collective Labour Agreement, for example. It is not even taken into account when the government decides a policy related to teachers' welfare. Two organizations of educational workers, such as Asosiasi Karyawan Pendidikan Nasional and Asosiasi Karyawan Pendidikan Swasta cannot play a more significant role since it is a professional organization emphasizing more on the improvement of the educators' profession.

In the era of democracy euphoria in Indone-

sia in the past years, a number of honorarium teachers organized strikes demanding for a better life. However, afterwards, they established organizations whose activities are temporary and are not functioning as trade union.

The characteristics of Indonesian society nowadays tend to listen and pay attention to demands when it is enforced by power such as demonstration. On the other hand, demands put forward in a more peaceful way such as negotiation tend to be dismissed or ignored. This is a difficult factor for teachers in the establishment of teachers' union because if they want to be listened to they have to go on the street, which is a contradictory to the values held in the society that teachers are not supposed to leave their 'divine' task to educate the younger generation.

The ratification of ILO Convention No. 87, which is implemented in the form of UU 21 2000, provides a wide space for workers in any kinds of field to form a trade union. In a very short time, 168 trade unions have been established, 63 out of the number have already been registered. However, out of 168, only two are from education sector, namely Asosiasi Karyawan Pendidikan Nasional and Asosiasi Karyawan Pendidikan Swasta.

Eventhough some decisions of the Ministry of Manpower state that any organization employing workers can be considered as a company, it is 'improper' and difficult to actually refer to an institution of education as a company. UU 21 2000 clearly states that a trade union can be established inside or outside the company, which means that a trade union can actually be established in an institution of education. However, very often, even the officials of the Ministry of Manpower, especially those in the regional level, have different opinions about it.

Closure

It is time for teachers in Indonesia to fight for their rights through collective struggle in teachers' union as it has been done successfully in Malaysia, such as by National Union of College Trained Teachers. On the other hand, hard work is

needed to convince people to accept the reality that as workers, teachers have the right to establish and become the members of trade union and therefore have also the rights to struggle for their rights the way in which a strike might be considered if necessary. Perhaps PGRI can be developed into a teachers' organization that can become a real teachers' union in the term of understanding of trade union. The problem is to ensure the acceptance of the fact that teachers are workers who have the rights to establish and become the members of trade union, and most important of all, the willingness and the openness of the government to enable civil servants to become members of trade/teachers' union the way in which the government is also willing to negotiate with teachers as employers and employees.

By doing that, it is expected that teachers' social status can be improved and therefore, it can improve the effectiveness of education. This is not an impossible notion as long as teachers can unite/be united in an organization that really struggles for their welfare. In their position, teachers have the capacity to help develop trade unionism to become a social movement. 

References

- Asian Confederation of Teachers (ACT). 1998. *The Role of Teachers in the Education of the 21st Century*. Bangkok.
- Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionist (BATU). 1999. *Building a Better World through Trade Action Towards a Trade Union Social Movement*, Kualalumpur.
- Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unionist (BATU). 1999. *Challenges of a Trade Union-Social Movement in the Asean Sub-region, Then and in the New Millenium*. Bangkok.
- International Labor Office. 2000. *Your Voice at Work*, Geneva.
- Ministry of Education & Culture. 1997. *Indonesian Education Statistics in Brief*.

Naisbitt, John. 1994. *Global Paradox*. London.

Priyatna, Soeganda. 1996. *Motivasi, Partisipasi dan Pembangunan*. Bandung.

Undang-undang tentang Serikat Pekerja/Serikat Buruh, No.21/2000.

UNESCO. 1996. *Strengthening the Role of Teachers in a Changing World*. Bangkok.

