

National Exams and Education Problems in Indonesia: Critical Study an Instrument for Improving the Quality of Education

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Abstract: The National Examination (UN) as an instrument for evaluating middle-level education in Indonesia always gets the spotlight from various parties. This is inseparable from the imbalance of education that occurs in the center and outermost and isolated areas in this country. So that makes the UN difficult to evaluate thoroughly the abilities of existing students. Therefore this paper tries to examine the extent to which the National Examination acts as an instrument capable of improving the quality of national education. Moreover, the development of evaluation systems offered by other countries, this can be seen as applied in developed countries. Furthermore, the existence of the COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the all over the world. Then, will the system that has been built by the government be maintained or will it use different evaluation instruments to improve the quality of education. This problem will be reviewed from the extent of the positive and negative impacts caused by this evaluation instrument with an analysis of the direct impact of the National Examination on the condition of education and students as the object of the education being carried out.

Keywords: National examination, Education system, Evaluation instruments.

Introduction

The national examination (In Indonesia, it is known as the *Ujian nasional* or UN) cannot be separated from the pros and cons. The government as the organizer wants the implementation of this exam to continue. Various methods are used, one of which is by holding continuous evaluations with education experts in the hope of minimizing errors in the implementation. With the hope that this evaluation system can be accepted academically and technically.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, there are groups who want educational reform consisting of teacher organizations, educational NGOs, professors from a number of universities, education practitioners and parents of students. this group sued the government's seriousness in organizing the UN and at its peak the guidance of these people to

abolish the UN (Buku Pintar Kompas Year 2015). This is in line with what some countries have done to abolish national exams such as Canada, Finland and Germany. According to them, the school has prepared and provided lessons during the teaching and learning process (Still exist in Indonesia, this is the reason some countries abolish national exams n.d).

Since the beginning, Indonesia has wanted to make quality education the spearhead of the country's progress. Various regulations have been made to be a reference in carrying out the educational process. Also, various kinds of curricula have been implemented since the country was founded, all of which are adapted to the needs of the community and do not escape the intervention of the ruling group (Nurhayati, 2010), so that the view of the community is that they

carry out what has been determined by their predecessors by carrying out reforms in various fields. education.

To measure the ability of students, the government held a national examination system. With the hope that there will be standardization of education nationally and the government can control the course of education in developed areas or underdeveloped areas so that there is equality in the quality of education nationally. However, it turns out that in reality this can only be done by schools that have qualified educators so that there is inequality in education carried out at the Center and in the regions, especially in remote areas (Damsar, 2011).

For this reason, this paper examines two main issues, namely how is the effect of the national exam on improving the quality of education nationally? Then how to improve national education?

Materials and Methods

This article is the result of a library research and uses qualitative research methods. In this case, the textual aspect is more emphasized in the literature review, in the form of reports on the results of previous research, journals, books and other library sources (Hasan, 2003). The data is managed systematically using descriptive analysis method in analyzing the existing data (Danim, 2003). Thus the data related to the National Examination will be presented and compiled in a systematic and analytical manner.

Results and Discussion

Education as a National System

Education is education based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. This education functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of the nation. The formulation emphasizes that the direction and purpose of national education is to build a dignified and civilized national character (Sugiyono, 2003). Since the beginning the

government has placed education as the nation's main strength. So that this education is enshrined in the 1945 Constitution which confirms that what is in existence is a manifestation of what we are witnessing today. Various educational institutions grow and become a destination for students to dig deeper into their knowledge about the importance of every action they take. The education system that is run will be very diverse according to who runs the education so that it has a direct impact on improving the quality of students.

National education is held to educate the nation's children. This is stated in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 which makes national education a guarantee of national education that exists in the country in what is stated as an effort to make national education an equal distribution of educational opportunities for the existing community. In addition, it is also intended to improve the quality and relevance and efficiency of education management to face the challenges of local, national and global life (Munirah, 2015).

The educational objectives formulated in the national education law have the aim of developing students. Through this education, students are expected to be human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and become democratic and responsible citizens (Sisdiknas No. 20 Tahun 2003 n.d.).

Besides these components, education has a way of educating systemically. This is carried out in three steps: first, the content which includes what is referred to as teaching materials or, materials used in equipping students to have skills in living life in the community. Second, is the process which is a machine used to print students as expected. Third, is the goal where this is the final result achieved or output (Munirah, 2015).

The education system is oriented not to the interests of market students or users of educational services or the community on the pretext that education is to equip the younger generation so that they are able to bring this nation and country quickly on par with other nations and countries that are more advanced. However, the implications of its development are not obtained in accordance

with what is aspired to but students are in a position as individuals and are ready to be sold through work contracts for money, and do not make themselves as scientists who care about human values, nation and state.

In its provisions, education is a tool so that humans can develop their potential through the learning process. Then the government seeks and organizes an education system that increases faith and piety as well as noble character in the context of educating the nation's life as regulated by law. So in this effort there is a synergy between the community and the government to create quality and quality education (Munirah, 2015).

Along with the spirit to organize national education as mentioned above, it gives the impression that education belongs to the government, and does not belong to the community, the spirit of education has been separated from the soul of the community. Where public or private schools feel that they have been uprooted from the environment in society. Many formal educational institutions from elementary to tertiary institutions have become separate communities or groups that are separated from the community. So, what happens is that the school focuses more on formal status and diplomas.

Brief History of National Education and National Examination

1. History of National Education in Indonesia

History of education in Indonesia cannot be separated from the struggles of the ideology in power at that time. Because the education that takes place cannot be separated from people's lives. Prior to the entry of Hindu-Buddhist culture in Indonesia, this was known as neolithic. The remains of this civilization can be found in the interior of Kalimantan and Sulawesi, and these cultures are closely related to maritime culture. Society at that time was cooperative, intimate and static: because there were no class differences in it. People live together in small communities and are led by a traditional leader who is in charge of leading religious ceremonies. Then after the entry of Hindu-Buddhist influence these traditional heads were made kings (Sugiyono, 2003). The goal at this time is that children are prepared to be able

to hold power in society as humans who have special abilities. The human being aspired to is one who has the spirit of gotong royong; respect the elders; and adhere to customs. When the influence of Islam came in, there was a big change in the education system at that time. At first, the influence of Hindu-Buddhist brought changes in the social system, from a tribal society to a royal system. In the hands of Muslims, education has changed to spread religion.

Not until there, the influence of Muslims also changed the pattern and education system that had been running for a long time at that time. Because education during the Hindu-Buddhist period was very exclusive and was shown to the nobility to legitimize the king's power, it turned into education for the whole community by following the hermitage pattern which later developed into a pesantren. Until the VOC colonial period in the archipelago, educational missions for the spread of religion were still carried out at that time. However, the pattern of education began to change at the beginning of the 20th century, at this time education began to have other goals. The Dutch colonial government needed an educated workforce to support industrialization. Since that time, the education system was started, which was shown to produce workers who could be paid cheaply. The orientation of education at that time was finally just to get the status of a government employee (*ambtenaar*). Until the Japanese occupation, the purpose of education did not prioritize educating indigenous people. Education at this time was oriented to Japan's need to win the war and form a Greater East Asian Union, so that education was prioritized on military education and emphasis on military service (Sugiyono, 2003).

It was only at the beginning of independence that the government tried to find a special form and characteristic of national education. Since the Old Order, New Order, until the post-reform (Sugiyono, 2003). Currently, Indonesian education continues to strive to provide the best education system for this nation.

2. National Examination (UN)

Educational problems in Indonesia seem endless. Since the beginning of its implementation,

education has faced various challenges, ranging from the curriculum applied to the problems that exist in carrying out what is known as what is currently being obtained.

In fact, in national education, the role of the government is very dominant. So the orientation of education is based on the interests of the government. This can be seen by the constant changing of the curriculum applied to national education. Almost every change of minister there is a change in the existing curriculum. Then an evaluation is held based on the so-called national exam.

The national exam (UN) is a system used in the basic education system to secondary education which has a long journey. The first test was carried out in 1950 or 5 years after the independence of this nation. The exam that was being carried out was called the Final Exam (UP) in the form of all the questions/questions being tested had answers in the form of an essay (Still exist in Indonesia, this is reason some countries abolish the national exam n.d). In 1965-1971 this exam was called the "State Examination", and was administered by the central government for almost all subjects and held uniformly throughout Indonesia. Furthermore, from 1972-1979 this evaluation system was called the school exam, where this exam was carried out by each school or group. Meanwhile, the central government only compiles and issues general guidelines.

Then from 1980-2000 this learning evaluation system was called the national final stage learning evaluation system (Ebtanas). This system is carried out by means of a number of subjects being tested uniformly throughout Indonesia. Meanwhile, the multiplication of questions is carried out in the regions. Pure Ebtanas scores (NEM) can be compared between schools. And in this case the student's graduation is determined by a combination of semester I, II and NEM scores.

In 2001 to 2004 this system was called the National Final Examination (UAN), in this system the assessment of learning outcomes was national, and student graduation at the UAN was determined by the value of individual subjects. Then in 2005 this system was changed again and named the National Examination (UN). The

holding of this national exam is for SMP and equivalent, SMA and equivalent, and SMK. As for SD equivalent, starting in 2008 the National Standard Final Examination (UASBN) was held (Tim, 2014).

The government tries to create a credible and academically and technically acceptable UN. The government in 2013 held the UN convention for two days from 26-27 September in Bali. The Minister of Education at that time, Muhammad Nuh, hoped that through this conversion various views on the UN model could be obtained and an agreement would be reached on the model or modification of the implementation of the UN. But in reality the convention does not touch the substance, but rather discusses and then agrees on technical issues in the implementation of the UN. Such as the procurement of manuscripts, distribution of questions and supervision, then it was determined that the composition of the National Examination did not change, namely 60 percent of the national exam scores and 40 percent of school scores (Tim, 2014).

At another time there was a claim for the government's lack of seriousness in organizing the National Examination, then a "counter" convention was held which was initiated by the education reform coalition consisting of teacher organizations, educational NGOs, professors of a number of universities, education practitioners, and parents of students, all of whom want the UN to be removed.

However, this UN underwent a change in implementation starting in 2015. Where a computer system was used to carry out exams, especially in urban areas. This was inspired by the national exams that were conducted in Indonesia-Singapore schools and Indonesia-Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) schools that used a computer system in the implementation of the National Examination in 2014. The government then aims to be more efficient and effective in terms of cost, time and energy (Maulidya, 2017).

Meanwhile, there are four purposes and functions of the UN. As clearly stated in the Decree of the Minister of National Education No. 047/U/2002, namely: first, as a means of controlling the quality of education nationally. Second, to

encourage the improvement of the quality of education. Third, as a consideration for graduating. Fourth, consideration in the selection of new students at higher education levels (SK Mendiknas Nomer 047/U/2002, Pasal 3 n.d.).

Positive and Negative Impacts of the National Examination

The government's efforts to improve the quality of education nationally have been accepted by some groups, but on the other hand, this UN has received criticism from other groups. In the following, the author describes the advantages and disadvantages of the quality evaluation system carried out by the government:

1. Positive impacts in the course of this exam cannot be denied that there are several positive sides of the National Examination which is run by the government. First, when approaching the National Examination, anxiety does not only come from students but also comes from the parents themselves, they encourage their children to excel, so it is not uncommon for parents to entrust their children directly to take tutoring (Bimbel) even though the costs are quite high.

Second, the seriousness of students in learning increases (Sulistiyo, 2016), so that they make the best use of the available time and reduce things that can have a fatal impact or that do not support their learning. Third, there is a beneficial impact for tutoring institutions (Bimbel), because more students who come for guidance automatically means that he will get a lot of benefits (Hairiyah, 2013).

2. Negative Impacts of The National Exam UN's trip has drawn criticism from various groups, both educational practitioners and academics, because it has many negative sides. The things that are the negative side of this UN are: First, it makes students have certain advantages and talents, so that students don't pay attention to it. The existence of this UN forgets them that school is a place to develop personality and not just to get grades. On the other hand, parents only focus on making grades the standard for their success in school (Chan, 2005). So that

there is no perceived development in certain talents and fields.

Second, the occurrence of self-marginalization in students is because the school forgets that there are certain talents from each student, but the time is running out for tryouts so that they cannot develop because they are forced to pursue graduation. Third, there is injustice in the implementation of this UN, especially for schools in remote areas. Such as areas in Papua, Inland Kalimantan and several other remote areas where schools that lack teachers do not have libraries, let alone language laboratories. Moreover, when the planting season arrives, the students are more than happy to grow crops to help their parents.

Fourth, school principals who think about the nature and substance of education applied in schools are only limited to delivering their students to be able to pass the National Examination and ignore the formation of character and morals which actually have a big role in the development of children (National exam n.d.).

Analysis of the Impact of the National Examination on Educational Conditions

Evaluation of participants is very important. This is carried out continuously so that the ability of students can be known periodically, as stated in the Law. No. 20 of 2003 article 8 paragraph 1 concerning the National education system: "Evaluation of student learning outcomes is carried out by educators to monitor processes, abilities, and continuous improvement of student learning outcomes" (Sisdiknas No. 20 year 2003 n.d.).

So, starting with the National Education System above, various groups have firmly rejected the National Examination held by the government in any form and replaced with school exams (Karso, 2018). In addition, for those who do not agree with the UN, based on the fact that only a few lessons have been tested, so that the field of study that is taken to the UN seems to have a more important position than the subjects that are not taken to the UN. From this it appears that the efforts made by the school are only shown to bring their students to be successful in the UN. In fact, the UN material

only covers intellectual aspects and has not been able to measure all aspects of education as a whole. So there was a narrowing of the meaning of education which only focused on the cognitive aspect because some of the lessons were tested, while motor skills, social, emotional, moral and character and spiritual aspects seemed to be ignored (Karso, 2018). This violates the SKL (Graduate Competency Standards) set by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Sisdiknas No. 20 year 2003 n.d.).

In addition, they view the National Examination as contradicting the principles of education itself. Because the test is supposed to guarantee the quality of students not to judge them on what they have learned over three years. Because what we see now is that the National Examination which is carried out by the government is used to judge learning outcomes that have been carried out for approximately 3 years through tests that are carried out for a few minutes and several lessons are carried out. Even though the non-graduate students must be used as introspection by the government in providing educational services to all students (Karso, 2018).

According to Joko Sulistiya, in order to improve the quality of education, the government always increases the graduation rate for students (Sulistiyo, 2016). In 2008 the graduation standard for junior high school students was 5.25 while in 2009 it was nine to 5.50 so that an increase in the graduation standard like this adds to the concerns of schools and parents, as well as making students depressed because they are afraid of failing in the National Examination.

Then there is also the fact the field is less disbelief majority of parents of existing teachers in school against their commitment to educate students. This is because schools do a lot of tutoring. So that sometimes tutoring is more popular with students than schools and especially the teachers themselves who have been teaching them for three years, not even a few have brought tutoring teachers in the form of collaboration between tutoring institutions and schools (Sulistiyo, 2016). So that the Minister of Education and culture during his visit to Malang last May touched on the tutoring agency. According to him,

the intensive promotion of tutoring can become an understanding of the determinants of student success in exams and enter PTUN (Students are successful because of tutoring or national exams n.d.).

On the other hand, according to Karso, there is a disparity in the quality of schools, the efficiency of the budget, it does not provide a guarantee for improving the quality of graduates. According to his research, in one of the remote schools he only taught subjects that were in the National Examination for the existing participants. The government uses standardization in carrying out educational policies that will provide educational facilities, so that it can be easily realized due to the enactment of the Lecturer and Teacher Law, where all teachers must have at least an S1 and D4 certificate (The laws of republic Indonesia no. 14 year 2005 about teachers and lecturers, 2005). Based on data from the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2015-2016 the number of teachers who have become S1 or D4 is already at the percentage of 84.86 percent (Statistik n.d.). This means that there are still 15.14 percent of teachers who do not have a diploma, therefore the quality of teachers must also be a priority for improving education (Sisdiknas No. 20 year 2003 n.d.).

Then the government continues to conduct studies and evaluations of the assessment of learning outcomes. As stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 in article 57 which reads:

“Evaluation is carried out in the context of controlling the quality of education nationally as a form of accountability for education providers to interested parties; evaluation is carried out on students, institutions and educational programs on formal and non-formal channels for all levels, units, and types of education (Mahmuda, 2017).

Therefore, every evaluation step is based on the principle of achieving something better than before, thus every evaluation is an effort to achieve a better quality of education (Mahmuda, 2017). However, the facts obtained in the field show that the National Examination which is a demand to improve the quality of education is carried out with various kinds of fraud to get the minimum standard results that have been determined. This fraud is like buying and selling answer keys,

giving cheats to students, and other fraud and this shows the lack of effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of the National Examination (Mahmuda, 2017).

Because it is clear that the purpose of the UN is listed in the function of the UN which is in accordance with SK No. 47/U/2002 number 3, namely: 1) a tool for controlling the quality of education nationally; 2) To encourage the improvement of the quality of education; 3) Considerations to determine student graduation and achievement predicate; 4) Considerations in the selection of new student admissions at a higher level of education (Sk Kemendiknas No.047/U/2002 Pasal 3 n.d.).

The functions listed above need to be reviewed in their implementation and evaluation because they are the main components that cannot be separated from the education plan. However, in evaluating the UN, not any evaluation can be applied to evaluate it. As for knowing it, each educational goal must be carried out. Irrelevance of measuring instruments will result in inaccurate measurement results and even lead to wrong measurements.

According to Mahmud, there are three things that have the most impact on the UN's policy: first, the assessment system that has been running quite well and through various aspects of test scores, including daily test scores, end-of-semester exams, attitudes, discipline and skills. However, what happened in the field was that the realization was not going well so that the assessment could be carried out more objectively (Mahmuda, 2017). This requires a synergy between the parents/guardians of the students and the students themselves as educational centers, so that the synergies of these three elements will make the success of existing education (Al-Zarnuji, 1981).

In addition, according to Mahmudi, it is important to note from a religious perspective. This is because every religion teaches the side of objectivity and honesty. Honesty is meant here is that there are three stages, namely before and after the implementation of the UN itself. Because what is happening now is that the National Examination is only determined by the implementation of the National Examination which lasts for three days, so

that the honesty as desired above does not materialize. Whereas honesty is the key to a good future for students to improve the quality of the nation.

Then from a moral perspective, it seems that it will never end among the students. which is in the form of juvenile delinquency which has increased in recent times. All of this is evident in the existence of births between teenagers, the use of illegal drugs, speeding, who like to doodle (juvenile delinquency, characteristics and solutions n.d). This is due to the low morale of course, more specifically the identity crisis and weak self-control of these students themselves. Of course, at an early age, external factors are no less important in influencing students, namely: divorce in the family, bad relationships, poor community/environment, inadequate religious education and the impact of technological advances (juvenile delinquency, characteristics and solutions n.d.).

As for the psychological perspective, this occurs because it is not based on scientific theory and empirical experience itself. So, according to Mahmuda (2017), the haste in turning individual ideas into public policies, without considering their substance and significance, has undermined the quality of education values in the UN case, and emphasized this pragmatism (Mahmuda, 2017). Because of this, our government's education policy is characterized by trial and error, hit and run and "projectism" so that the students who are the obvious victims will be (Mahmuda, 2017).

From some of the perspectives above, it is necessary to evaluate the system as well as facilities and infrastructure even though the current National Examination is not a determinant of student graduation. However, the mindset of students and society towards the national exam. So it is necessary to evaluate the implementation of the UN to find the best formula in its implementation. Second, evaluation of the existing education system from the form of decentralization by the government to centralization back to students to keep education away from the practical political activities of government elites. Improving the quality of education from teachers to students. Furthermore, parents should also play an active role in educating children outside of school.

Direct Impact of National Examinations on Students Testing

Standards that change from year to year have several impacts on students. This also has a direct impact on schools such as reduced time for teaching, neglect of the curriculum materials being tested and the increase in test-like preparation materials (Hidayah, 2013).

As for the behavior of students, there is very high anxiety in students. However, according to the results of the anxiety of students who face the national exam using self-efficacy training, it shows that students who received self-efficacy training showed a significant decrease in student anxiety in facing the National Examination.

This anxiety is a change in behavior from the psychological aspect of students for fear of failing in carrying out the national exam. What should be the determinant of graduation is the overall assessment aspect of school grades and the results of the National Examination. Because when viewed from the characteristics of ideal change and on student learning, it is not only from the cognitive side but from the overall aspect of change, namely: intentional change, active positive change, effective and functional change (Mustofa, 2015).

Conclusions

From the problems above, it can be concluded that the existing problems are due to the mindset of the parents and the students themselves. Both of them have an excessive fear of the results of the National Examination so that they sometimes commit fraud, even though the National Examination is already a pure standard for student graduation. Therefore, there must be a synergy between teachers, students and students. Those who are responsible for the education obtained by students, whether they are obtained from school or obtained from family and society. In addition, all should improve educational infrastructure and facilities, so that disadvantaged regions can pursue education carried out in developed regions, and the government has an obligation to prosper the educators in this beloved country.

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