

PLACE-BASED EDUCATION APPROACH AS AN INNOVATION OF AN INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Curriculum design is aimed to promote equality of empowerment. In most practice, however, the curriculum purposes confront conflicts especially between national and local needs. Consequently, there are many insightful and innovative educational work which has relatively small advantages for students and schools in its flexibility and opportunity. This leads to a situation in which some groups have lack of opportunities in getting benefit from the educational curriculum application. This essay presents an approach as an innovation of an integrated curriculum called place-based education. The significance of this strategy is believed to be able to promote the content of learning to the level of local's relevance and engagement. Finally, the more relevant of the learning content to the students' socio-cultural life the broader participation they can play in the community and future career.

Keywords: *English as foreign language; place-based education; integrated curriculum*

Introduction

The internationalisation of English language has made it as a learning language all over the world. From the city to slum areas, English is taught from primary to tertiary education. Meanwhile, the ways of communication in educational sectors have changed rapidly over years. The changes have created innovations which aim to restructure and improve all educational domains including teaching and learning approaches, pedagogy, curriculum and organization in order to meet the needs of all learners and other educational stakeholders. An innovation is defined as a whole

new concept or outcome in a particular context or an improvement of a procedure (Commonwealth Department of Education, 2001). As most of educational sectors are learners-centered, the innovations on one hand have benefited certain groups of learners. On the other hand, some other groups may still have lack of opportunities to get benefit from these innovations. It can be derived from the lack of teachers' preparedness or other schools' technical resources. It also can be caused by the complexity of materials provided in English lessons which are not familiar with students' daily needs.

An integrated curriculum can inspire the students who learn English as foreign Language (EFL). The EFL learners can be more motivated in English language learning since the curriculum takes an interest in their local sources. This is what to be called as place-based education. It can be defined as any educational approach in which the local environments are used as a context for teaching and learning (Ciardi, 2006). It represents a recent trend in the broad field of outdoor education and recaptures the idea of living and learning in harmony with the earth and with each other. Although the society becomes increasingly urbanized and technologized, which seems to be out of dated to adopt local sources when students' knowledge and skills may need to be modernized, this essay argues that educators must continue to adopt and adapt more of the goals, theory, and practice of place-based education and integrate them into curriculum. The outline of this essay will include the English as a foreign language, integrated curriculum, and the significance of place-based education with an example of EFL place-based education syllabus.

Discussion

English as a Foreign Language

English has become an important language in developing countries. It is crucial to find jobs in either small institutions or in a globalised business world. Sadly to say that the fact is that many school graduates cannot speak English. Some schools' problems are related to both students and teaching. In Indonesia, for example, the students are provided with a range of English grammar without their clear functions and the usages as well as application in daily life (Artsiyanti, 2002). Artsiyanti adds

that materials taught in the schools are too technical, such as technology, medical, and electrical processes. Krashen and Terrel (1983) argue that foreign language achievement is usually measured by grammar-type tests that involve heavy use of conscious grammar rules. Thus, even though the students are able to remember the vocabulary words, they fail to know the words they often meet and deal in their everyday life.

Using a variety of resources, the education in the urban has more opportunities to make it more practical and provisional. The urban education is also provided with immersing access and high order skills which enables each individual to gain benefit maximally from education. Conversely, the schools in the rural, with a complete lack of qualified human resources, school management and infrastructure, and technology have caused children to be less benefited by the schools. Apart from urban and rural differences, Egel's (2009) study also found a difference between private and state schools. His investigation revealed that the teachers were able to recognize and aid the learning styles of their students at the private school because they had plenty of time and sufficient resources provided by the school. However, according to Egel, EFL teachers at the state schools were not always able to accommodate their students' learning style preferences in regard to overcrowded classes and insufficient time to recognize all of their students' preferences. In short, both rural and state schools have limits in their usage of supplementary teaching aids because of lack of resources in the school.

This phenomenon has created various and massive private English courses. Apart from good or bad quality of those courses, there is an indication about the less quality of English teaching in schools. The curriculum may change or be innovated; however, there are many graduates from schools who cannot even introduce themselves in English. These difficulties are caused by the rareness of communication between teachers and students in the classroom, the grammatical preference in teaching forms rather than its function, and complicated vocabulary words rather than simple words used daily. Because of the lack of practice in the classroom and speaking initiation in school environment, for example, some students are shy to speak English because they may be laughed at by their friends. In line with this, Egel

(2009) claims that EFL teachers must have the knowledge and skills to identify both their own teaching styles and their students' learning styles. This view is right because when the teacher does not have teaching knowledge then the clashes in the classroom will occur and affect the students' learning potential and attitudes towards English and learning in general. Considering the facts and issues around mastering English as Foreign language above, an innovation on curriculum has to be developed to meet the needs of some important stakeholders in education.

Integrated Curriculum

An integrated curriculum is sometimes considered as a new and modern curriculum. There is an increasing effort in improving the significance of curriculum to reach all level of community. This is in line with the aims of curriculum itself to promote equality of empowerment (Kelly, 2009). Therefore the development of capacities and capabilities to support every individual needs to be created. However, Brady and Kennedy (2003) state that an innovative curriculum was originated in and has been practiced since the 1910s in junior high schools in the United States. They argue that integrated curriculum has also been widely applied by some developed countries and integrated extensively in middle years of the school curriculum to promote interconnected angle of pedagogy approach in terms of interactive, learner-centred approaches.

In integrated curriculum, more interdisciplinary approaches are designed as an innovative concept rather than putting academic discipline as the basic for organizing the curriculum (Brady & Kennedy, 2007). The aims of the application of integrated curriculum are various. It includes a Kennewell's view which states that students' abilities may be jointly resulted if students work collaboratively towards a single product (Kennewell, 2001). Another reason in using this approach is for multi context-based syllabus instead of a single context-based to enlighten profound knowledge and expand understanding of a gist rather than the incomprehensible exiting contents (Pilot & Bulte, 2006). The subjects within the integrated curriculum are connected whether from general standards and principles to specific practices

and contents, from basic levels to complex advanced levels, and from one prerequisite course to another related course (Kim, Andrews, & Carr, 2004).

Kim et al. (2004) divide the curriculum integration into four types. They are intradisciplinary, interdisciplinary, infused, and correlated. An intradisciplinary approach combines different strands of one subject or discipline into the same lesson and an interdisciplinary approach combines different subjects or disciplines into a single course or unit. An infused curriculum has specific technologies or teaching strategies added to course content and a correlated curriculum refers to the linkage of concepts from separate subjects or courses.

In line with above view, Pilot & Bulte (2006) also state that to develop a better learning atmosphere and ensure that students are actively and effectively involved in learning activities, there must be a context-based movement. Consequently, the method of interdisciplinary subject is a medium that motivates the sense of confidence and improves the learning intrinsic interest. Thus, if students show their interest in the topics given and they are already good at using the contextual English language for their daily life, this will engage them with the excitement in the study. In addition, if teachers can vary their teaching styles and are able to encourage students' interest in learning environment, an invaluable outcome can be gained from the process. To see if subject curriculum can be integrated, Brady and Kennedy (2007) say that the teachers often have to work hard finding the ways. Some key competencies in integration include collecting, analyzing and organizing information, communicating ideas, planning and organizing activities, and working with others or in teams (Brady & Kennedy, 2007).

Significance of Place-based Education

Place-based education (PBE) is a learning strategy which focuses on using the local community as an integrating context for learning and is grounded in the resources, issues, and values of the local community (Powers, 2004). This 'place-based education' is a relatively new term in educational literature. However, according to Janice and Clifford (2000) a concept which is almost similar to this approach was introduced by John Dewey in 1950s in relation to experiential approach to stu-

dent learning in the local environment. In regard to the term, Powers (2004) says that the place-based education is often interchangeably used with some other similar terms including community-based learning, service-learning, environment as an integrated concept, and project-based learning. PBE is frequently discussed at a distance from the urban. However, Ciardi (2006) claims it as not to be limited to rural setting as it can also attract people in the issues shaping urban life. To accommodate students' individual skills and abilities, Chawla and Escalante (2007) argue that the place-based education uses the environment as an integrating context across disciplines which is characterized by exploration of the local community and natural surroundings, hands-on experiences of environmental discovery and problem-solving, interdisciplinary curricula, team teaching, and learning.

The need for place-based education is derived from the phenomenon that there are many insightful and innovative educational works occurring today that have relatively small advantages for students and school in its flexibility and opportunity afforded by curriculum. Moreover, as the curriculum is decided in the state level, there often exists a conflict between national and local needs (Murray & Greer, 1996). Powers (2004) finds that place based education has been an effective tool for students to see the relevance of what they are learning which motivates them to be more engaged in the learning process. A study by Ciardi (2006) also found the significance of this approach for learning to provide an entry point for exploring shared experiences and connected students with the issues that shape the communities to which they belong. Kelly (2009) also agrees that culture must be considered as the total environment that the children develop and learn by making sense and meaning of it through their interaction.

To explore the local community and surrounding natural areas in applying the PBE, some schools take students outdoor. Chawla and Escalante (2007) found that based on some studies, it is suggested that from the outdoor program of place-based education approaches students showed more cooperation and conflict resolution skills, more positive environmental behaviors, better problem solving, learning motivation, and classroom behavior. This achievement has improved the ratings of student assessments and teacher, parents', and teachers'. Chawla and Escalante

(2007) also assert that place-based education immerses students in local heritage, cultures, landscapes, opportunities and experiences, and use them as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum.

Another consideration stated by Silver, Strong and Perini (2000) is a reality that outside the school children tend to rely on their natural ways of learning. Conversely, they are often asked to process knowledge and skills in only one or two ways in school. Hence, the teachers need to create a classroom environment that allows the students to process all information in a way they do outside the school. For teachers, Powers (2004) also indicates the benefit for increasing their confidence in curriculum planning which includes the exposure to resources as well as the networks built among them.

There are some issues surrounding the place-based education. It includes the lack of administrative support, not enough time for place-based education problems, discomfort of many teachers in outdoor classroom settings, awareness of community associations and other groups of the possibilities, and unclear concept for teachers and administrators on how place-based education addresses educational standards. To build administrative supports, for instance, it needs hard work from any parties such as parent and community support. The students' leadership is also important to be built including identifying a thread that links student interests to the outdoors, creating a classroom based on safety and risk-taking, finding a connection that helps students understand how the project will affect them, their families, neighbors and friends (Promise of place, 2009).

In contrast to many other educational approaches which set the goal of schooling to prepare students to work and function in a highly technological and consumer-oriented society, place-based education educators aim to prepare people to live and work to sustain the cultural and ecological integrity of the places they inhabit (Janice & Clifford, 2000). Therefore, place-based education learners must have knowledge of ecological patterns, systems of causation, and the long-term effects of human actions on those patterns. Janice and Clifford also note that providing students with the knowledge and experiences is needed to actively participate in

the democratic process as one of the most compelling reasons to adopt place-based education. Furthermore, the school has a key role in developing and sustaining the community. If we support the community to build employment opportunities and a sense of self-esteem then the students will have a future (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2001).

An Example: Module of Place-based Education Syllabus

Syllabus, as an operational construct, is a planned form of support for teaching activity in the classroom and form of guidance for constructing appropriate teaching materials (White, 1988). There are two approaches that can be used in designing language teaching syllabus as suggested by White (1988) namely the approach of intervention in the learning process through the pre-selection, specification and presentation of content which prioritizes the pre-specification of linguistic or other content or skill objectives and the approach of intervention by an authority, including the teachers which provide learners an immersing real life communication without any artificial pre-selection of items. Another syllabus suggested by White is situational syllabus. 'Situational' method refers to "the contexts in which language and behaviour occur in the 'real world', outside the classroom" (White, 1988, p. 62). In considering a variety of situations, White focuses this design on the setting (where?), the participants (who?), and relevant objects within the setting (what?). An example is as follow:

Setting	in the market
Participants	seller, customer
Objects	fish, vegetable, fruit, money, groceries, kitchen utensils, shops

Such situation is selected based on 'the real world' condition in certain environment, such as *going to fish, mapping the village resources, helping parent in the rice field, playing in the farm, and feeding the cattle.*

Here is the example of module of syllabus for English lesson in regard to place-based education:

1. Keywords: field trip, mapping, literacy
2. Content selection: Subject: English
Module: village mapping

- Unit: 'areas in neighborhood'
3. Pedagogical area: Place-based education, environment as integrating context ducation for sustainability
 4. Subject area: reading, writing
 5. Delivery area: school-based
 6. Demographic area: rural area
EFL
 7. Age area: secondary (grade 7-9)
 8. Tasks:
 - Field trip: Students are equipped with clipboards, paper, and pencils. They walk around the village and gather information as they meet with community members, discover and jut write down everything familiar and not so familiar items in English.
 - Mapping/listing: Students map or list (depends on students' preference) their city by plotting their school, roads, the river, rice field, forest their homes and other points of community interest.
 - Literacy: The students are assigned to read neighborhood informational text and talk to people they meet. Some questions they may ask involves: "What is an interesting spot of our neighborhood? What makes our neighborhood function? What's the history of our neighborhood? What roles do people have in our community?" students begin to see the interconnectedness of their place.
 - Writing and reading: After a field trip, students write personal narratives about the community resources they have visited and read it to the rest of class.
 9. Outcome area civic engagement
Self-efficacy
Self- awareness
 10. Assessment: Peer/group assessment
Self assessment
Portfolio assessment
Whole evaluation from teacher

Conclusion

Learning English as a foreign language has been difficult as the attitudes attached to it are still limited. It includes unclear functions of grammar, technical vocabulary words, and poor teaching styles. For these reasons, this paper addresses place-based education strategy in teaching English as foreign language as a part of recent innovative curriculum design which offers authentic learning and learner-centered. In this aspect, the integrated curriculum can be applied to serve for teaching and learning improvement. Such an interdisciplinary approach is also aimed to provide meaningful learning outcomes to teachers, learners and community by adjusting learning to local resources. It also produces considerable advantages in terms of instructional knowledge and pedagogical knowledge for the teachers. For

the students, enthusiasm and engagement become the key assets to create learning environment efficiently and effectively. To sum up, this approach offers teachers opportunity to maximalise teaching styles which assist them to improve their professional satisfactions and addresses students' needs for English as a tool for searching better future career.

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