

OPINI

My Lecturers

WF. Maramis

Below, please find the article posted by Dr. Bernadette D. Novita Dewi, dr, Mked. in our WhatsApp group (FK UK WIDYA MANDALA SBY) and asking for comment, and my (Willy F. Maramis) respons to it.

Novita:

Ada tulisan menarik tentang dosen di Indonesia, dan alasan universitas-universitas di Indonesia tidak akan bisa bersaing dalam skala internasional. Apa betul, mereka yang jadi dosen itu banyak yang “kurang qualified”?...
Mohon pencerahan

Article:

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/12/07/ri-universities-cannot-compete-internationally.html>

Universities in Indonesia are having difficulties matching the world's prominent universities and even Asia's best. None of our universities are on the list of the 100 best Asian universities in 2013, according to Times Higher Education, while Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia have institutions on the list. Despite the abundant resources spent by the government on improving the quality of education, it seems our best universities cannot even be the best (or even close to the best) in ASEAN, let alone in

Asia or globally. Here are some problems we face in improving our higher education system.

First, the best people do not become lecturers. All parents, if they had the choice, would pick the best people to teach their children. It is widely accepted that *the quality of education systems cannot exceed the quality of teachers*. However, *the best students have no desire to become lecturers*. They usually go to large multinational companies, which compete aggressively to recruit our best graduates. Some companies provide scholarships to top students, with the agreement that the students must work

for the companies following graduation. On the contrary, *our universities do not usually have clear recruitment strategies and procedures*. University officials are mostly very passive and not very creative when it comes to recruiting new lecturers. Faculty staff do not bother to attract talented candidates or seriously look at selecting the best students who could become excellent teachers.

Second, there is no financial security for lecturers. The main salary of a lecturer is insignificant compared to those with similar education levels who work in other industries. Low salaries make university lecturer positions unattractive to the country's best and brightest. There are many great Indonesian PhD holders who have opted to teach in universities abroad, earning much more than they would have done working in Indonesian universities. Unfortunately, we cannot expect them to return to Indonesia to strengthen our educational systems for many reasons, one being the amount of salary involved.

Further, faculty members resort to other sources of income to survive. The side jobs include teaching in other universities, becoming consultants, establishing a business and public speaking. These side jobs have significantly distracted our lecturers from their commitment to the quality of higher education.

As a result, being a lecturer is a full-time job only on paper. Some are even willing to cancel classes for these side jobs, especially if the jobs provide significant monetary incentives. Further, many offices of lecturers

are vacant most of the time. This would never happen in good universities with established governing systems.

Therefore, if the Education and Culture Ministry has difficulties finding ways to absorb the 20 percent budget from the government, it might start thinking about increasing the salaries of university lecturers.

Third, reward and punishment systems are ineffective. University lecturers are perceived as the most valuable assets to the academic institutions. In fact, some argue the lecturers are the university itself, as most decisions concerning the institution are made by lecturers. However, these so called 'assets' can be classified into three groups: *Operating assets, non-operating assets and troubled assets*.

Many faculty members are great teachers, productive researchers and effective administrators (operating assets), while some of them are ineffective in their main assignments (non-operating assets), and there are usually a few who create chronic problems for the institution and who are persistent in their bad behavior (troubled assets). Ideally, the operating assets are rewarded, the non-operating assets are warned or further trained and the troubled assets are 'liquidated'. Unfortunately, what sometimes happens is that the institution punishes the high performing (usually young) lecturers by giving them more assignments (with no financial incentives), while the university does not have the authority to warn misbehaving, or fire troubled lecturers.

Fourth, there is too much teaching and not enough research. To promote research, world-class universities usually limit teaching loads to three or fewer courses per semester for their faculty. Some lecturers hired to conduct research will teach even fewer classes. College deans are pure administrators and they do not usually teach, while department heads might teach one class per semester. Their income is not dependent upon how many classes they teach as they receive a fixed salary, and the teaching load is agreed during the hiring process.

Yet in Indonesia, many lecturers are severely overloaded as they might teach more than 10 classes per semester with financial incentives for teaching more classes. Even deans, department heads and other officials sometimes teach many classes. Thus, it is difficult for a lecturer to control his teaching quality and to find time for research.

What usually happens is that our lecturers will co-author studies with their students and shift the research workload to the students. In good universities, most lecturers co-author with other lecturers. This difference in research partnerships definitely affects the quality of research.

Even lecturers in a so-called 'teaching university' abroad do not usually teach more than five classes per semester. A university in Indonesia wanting to declare itself a 'research university' should limit the teaching load of its faculty members to provide space for research. We need to establish a compensation system to reduce the teaching load without

lowering the income, and a system that fosters research.

The writer is a lecturer at the School of Economics and Business, Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta. He has lectured in the US and the Middle East. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/12/07/ri-universities-cannot-compete-internationally.html>, by Fuad Rakhman.

Respons (WF Maramis):

The article from <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/12/07/universities-cannot-compete-internationally.html>, by Fuad Rakhman, a lecturer at the School of Economics and Business, Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta, although four years old already, is still interesting and good for introspection (posted recently by Bernadette D. Novita Dewi, dr, Mked. in our WhatsApp group and asking for comment). It contains what is generally believed, but I don't fully agree with it. According to me, it is too intrapunitive as if the fault is mainly with the university or some may say there is too much internal locus of control. *A university does not stand alone*, it is only a very small, although important part of human enterprise. I don't want to be too extrapunitive or have a strong external locus of control, but nevertheless we must also take into account the influences of the larger community with its culture, struggles and turbulences, because we are the product of our community and the universities are the product of ours.

What is the cause and why are some countries developing or under-developed or poor and others are developed or rich. Sociologists have analysed it, and their conclusion is (with many examples): it is not because of the age of the country, or the natural resources, nor because of intelligence or race. It is mainly because of *how the people are living the life values in their every day life*. They found that in the poor countries the majority of the people does not live according to those life values, only a small minority does. Those values are: 1) *Ethics as the basic principle of daily living*, 2) *Honesty and integrity*, 3) *Responsibility*, 4) *Abiding by the rules and laws of the community*, 5) *Respecting the rights of other fellow people*, 6) *Love working*, 7) *Saving and investing*, 8) *Willing to work hard*, 9) *Be on time*. *These values and their attitudes are formed and internalised since childhood on through culture and education*. Please, have a reflection on this in our Indonesian context.

We may again and again complain about our universities, a kind of catharsis, but it is better to come up with an applicable solution. How to bring about change? *First of all, we must be willing to change!* And change means stress. "Get out of your comfort zone" says the motivator, even if it is easier to say than to do, it is possible. There are many unmanageable factors, don't loose your energy and time on those. Let's take the manageable ones. We may start anywhere, but the first and closest thing is, *let it begin with me*, don't wait for others to begin.

As lecturers and members of a *civitas academica*, to bring about change at our university for the good of it, according to our vision-mision and our cor values (*not* "change or die" as some fanatics may say or only change for the sake of change), if we wait untill others begin first, then it will never happen. Again, "*Let it begin with ME*". Let us start with the small things, like: Trying to follow the rules, which may be different from other universities (but which are considered best, for the time being, for our university by the Management and the Foundation who have a broader scope and view of the situation); trying to communicate effectively and empathically; taking into consideration the group dynamics of human interaction at campus between fellow lecturers at meetings and between students; trying hard to come on time at meetings and lectures, because *our presence makes a difference*, therefor we reschedule our priorities for that; not walking around or talking with others during meetings or being busy with our gadget, but paying attention to the topic being discussed; not behaving like students, like we are one of them, "one of the boys" (which is not nessary, also not wise), we only behave so that they can look up to us as a role model and trust us as a friend during their difficult times of study. In short we try to serve and work with *ethics, discipline and good manners*. May God bless us all. Amen.