Critical thinking and speaking proficiency: Two inseparable skills in global era

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Abstract: Living in this 21st century challenges the world citizen including ESP students and those who are in needs to go for global market to have various competencies. One of them is having the competency in critical thinking. The more critical the people are, the wider opportunity they will get in the workforce. This competence would be even better if it collaborates with speaking proficiency. In facts, Indonesian students thinking skill and speaking skill are still being a problem. The students are not ready to face the world due to the lack of effective strategy for them to express their mind in their own fields. These deficiencies must be eradicated or minimized at least in the purpose of preparing for more competitive human resources. We have to equip the students with certain strategy to enable them to think critically and speaking fluently. This paper aims at describing the strategy for the students to identify issues from empirical studies, to formulate precise personal point of view and to provide data or information as evidences related to the needs of working skill.

Keywords: critical thinking, speaking skill, global competitiveness

Introduction

Higher level of education is one of the important indicators in developing a nation. Education is believed to encourage economy development. Harbison and Myer (2008) said that investment in the scope of education contribute certainly to the growth of economy. Globalization in this century causes many changes to the life of society including the education. The quality and the relevancy of education in high level of education in Indonesia are still left behind comparing with other countries. The report of global competitiveness at World global Forum in 2016 places Indonesia in 41st position out of 138 countries. Being middle skill workforce with high competences, being certified and productive are obviously needed in ASEAN Economics Community era which officially welcome various access not only for trading, but also for professional workers such doctor, advocate, accountant, robotic expert, programmer, software maker, design graphic, animator and many others. This means that Indonesia is now on the phase of this condition where the competition among the workers in the world is widely opened. This problematic issue should actually be anticipated by revitalization and strategic policy in higher level of education with vocation based. It is exceedingly true that knowing that the students from this vocation schools should learn not only the theories in every meeting in the classroom but also the portion of doing practicum needs to be more given. It is hoped that they will be prospective competent graduates which can compete with others in the workforce. Moreover, the graduates from polytechnic is seated in level 5 as written in Cabinet Secretariat of Republic Indonesia, Deputy of People’s Welfare (2012) about Indonesian National Qualification Framework (Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia--KKNI), in which this level is equal with an analyst or technician.

Based on Directorate General of Students Learning of the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education (Dirjen Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan, Kementerian Riset, Teknologi dan Pendidikan...
Tinggi (KEMRISTEKDIKTI) in 2017, there are some strategies need to be used by the vocation students to compete with those in ASEAN countries, such as English proficiency, soft and professional skills or communication skills, entrepreneurial mindset, leadership, character building, problem solving and more. Once those points have been achieved by the students in vocation, they will be regarded as ASEAN or global ready graduates. Dealing with those competences, there are two noteworthy skills need to be upgraded for the vocation students, they are critical thinking skill and speaking proficiency. In the 21st century, people are expected to have an ability to think critically as a way of analyzing the thoughts, ideas, point of view to be more specific. Lipman (1988) defines critical thinking is skillful, responsible thinking that is conducive to good judgment because it is sensitive to context, relies on criteria, and is self-correcting. Critical thinking is very different with general thinking due to its particular depth analysis. The condition of Indonesian critical thinking competence can be seen through the report of PISA by The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018a), Indonesia is in 63 out of 72 countries that participated to the program. One of the indicators to score is about this competence beside science and math. This competence plays an important role in this global era especially in answering the challenges which occur in the work field. So that, the students in vocational education are directed and set to own this ability at the time they are in the classroom or within teaching and learning process. In order to get them ready to their upcoming jobs.

Furthermore, critical thinking needs another element, that is speaking proficiency, to be exposed. Otherwise, the result of the thinking will not be known or listened to by other people. In the scope of establishing very good communication among other people in life, the ability to communicate is very essential. Jane Doe from Ottawa University (2014) clarifies that the benefits of having such effective communication especially in workplace can actually help increase productivity, decrease errors, and support operation to run smoother. The urge of gaining this competence is also written in the OECD description which discusses more about the elements or skills should be mastered by the people especially the workers.

Based on ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) blueprint in 2015, it is mandated to all ASEAN members to increase the competitiveness in human resources, innovation, technology, communication and self readiness. It deals with the ability to communicate to various people from hundred even thousands different races in the world. The government through the ministry of Indonesian manpower in 2015 has identified some problems need to overcome such unclear workers wage, minor record of workers productivity, high rate of unemployment, poor quality of international language competence and others. Thus, communication is still a matter.

Critical thinking and speaking proficiency

Based on Willingham (2007), critical thinking is actually seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems, and so forth. Thinking critically will stimulate such creativity and expand the way you utilize and manage your time (Hader, 2005) and critical thinking does not only describe the competence to think dealing with the logical rules and probability, but also the the competence to apply these skills to the problems in life. Critical thinking could provide you with more fruitful understanding of yourself. It will also offer you an occasion to be more objective, more able to control the emotion, and more open-minded as you finally appreciate other people’s views and opinions. By thinking more critical, you will get more confidence to present such fresh perspectives and new insights.

According to OECD (2018b) about the future of education and skills education in 2030, the students will be expected to apply their knowledge in such evolving and unknown circumstances. For that, they need wide and broad range of skills, including skill of cognitive and meta-cognitive such as creative thinking, critical thinking, self-regulation and learning to learn; skill of social and emotional such as self-efficacy, empathy and collaboration); and skill
Vocational education, Polytechnic, do understand about these issues. It is one of things which might encourage the government to do such revitalization of education especially to the vocation in recent year. Why is critical thinking important in the workplace? In facts, critical thinking is applicable whenever people are expected to make a decision or resolve a problem. People who work in any circumstances will possibly make sort of decision. Some are considerably good decisions that get the business forward and increase number of profit. While others might be poor decisions that get the business down and reduce its profit. At any level in the work field, this kind of condition is frequent occurrence. The one who seats in the level of management and executives is not the only one who is responsible in making decisions; decision making and problem solving. Hundreds of decisions every day people make have an opportunity for success or failure. The problem of having no good critical thinking skill in the scope of education has been occurring until now. The students have difficulty in sharpening their critical thinking due to some reason; the teaching strategy given by the teachers or lecturers does not require the students to dig their ideas out into good point of views, at the time reading a material, students get accustomed to read without limiting the time, so that the time seems work for nothing, then the students themselves are reluctant to spare the time to read any books which help them to broaden their mind instead. Reading habit of Indonesian people is categorized low. A study from Central Connecticut State University in United States (2016) about World’s Most Literate Nation concludes that Indonesian ranks 60th out of 61 countries in term of reading interest. It is below Thailand in 59th and above Botswana in 61st position. It is possibly be dealing with how often the students read books inside school or even outside school every day. Does the environment encourage the students to read, do the teachers in the school motivate the students to read during teaching learning process, how easy the access for the students to get the books as the resources at school and home and others. Winter-Hebert (2016) claims that reading habit brings more benefits to the readers such mental stimulation, stress reduction, knowledge, vocabulary expansion, memory improvement, stronger analytical thinking skill, improve focus and concentration, better writing skill, tranquility, and free entertainment. If reading promises more beneficial in life, why we do not prioritize reading as it is.

Another problem challenges the education in Indonesia is on the communication skill of the people especially the students by using international languages. Kukla (2017), vice president of OI global partners, states that when an organization deal with well-established communication, it demonstrates an investments to the workforce, enhances self motivation, and allows employees to feel a part of the company’s success. When the vision, goals and expectations are known to the workforce, the message is clear: they are part of something bigger, they hard works pay off, and they are being valued and respected. Global study by Tower Watson in 2017, found that companies which are highly effective at communication are almost twice as likely to be high-performing than companies which are not. Good communication problems at work due to few jobs are running in solo acts. It basically takes communication to work on a team, and even people who work alone have to submit and explain report to their bosses. On the other hand, when you run a business, you should tell your employees what's expected from them. Bad communication will lead to errors and sometimes failure. Establishing an effective communication would help prevent them.

If the worker talk each other on the job, that is actually a major step to build a good team. The employees who are about to talk with their colleagues are more enthused about coming to work. If they know they can talk to the boss about problems and that the boss will listen, that binds them to the company. Good communication builds teams and increases employee loyalty. The students who are in high level of education especially in the vocational mostly have problem with it. Moreover, the communication will be in international language such English. Even though this skill is urged to be owned but the difficulty to get is still
frightening the students at all time. Basic (2011) finds out that the feeling worry, doubt and shy are the main factors why people or the students cannot make their verbal communication work optimally. In the classroom, in most common opportunity given to speak, the students usually express their signs like having no more idea to propose, post phoning the time to talk with an “ehm, uhmm” and other mumbling expressions, sweaty in the classroom, even more they do not want to talk in a word towards their weakness in speaking itself. Another factor which makes the students are not able to speak is having less number of practice to speak given by the teachers. However, mostly the teaching method applied by the teachers is known as preaching method, where the center of attention is on the teachers. The students are gaining the knowledge through the things stated by the teachers. What is instructed by the teachers should automatically be obeyed. Moreover, the presentation session or depth discussion is far of being routine to do. These facts induce the psychological effects of the students, so that they are not accustomed to speak in front of many people.

How to increase these competences

On the purpose of upgrading these two elements for preparing the students to be more competitive before going to the work field, there should be an appropriate strategy to implement especially for the vocational education since critical thinking and its relations to the education has become an issue. According to Lipman (2003), the teachers are responsible to develop critical thinking of the students and not just push them from one educational level to the next. Brown (2004) argues the objectives of a curriculum in an ideal academic English program should definitely go beyond linguistic factors, and to develop the art of critical thinking. Critical thinking and speaking have been identified as two of several skills necessary to prepare students for post-secondary education and the workforce. Fisher (2003) also stressed the significance of teaching critical thinking skills to the students. He gradually proposed that the thinking skills do not equip them enough to face the problems that they encounter either in education or in their daily lives, thus they need to be taught about it. There are many kinds of strategies which can be used to increase these two skills such classroom conversation, presentation, speaking class session and others. Debates have been defined as an educational strategy for students to be more active involvement in teaching learning process, integration of taught materials, development problem solving skills. Tawil Martin (2016) from university of Montana has founded the facts that the problem of these critical thinking and speaking could be overcome by applying debating strategy with California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory (CCTDI), the significance improvements occur in an open mindedness, analyticity, confidence and reasoning. Based on the research done in Simon Fraser University in Canada found that debating strategy is set to experience arranging well-formed assertions. In addition, Nurcahyo (2012) in handbook of Indonesian Debate added that the goal of debating is to explore the basic reason behind every single point of view. Those who are involved in debate are expected to be able to think critically to maintain their arguments and to rebut the opposite ideas. Then they are urged to be able to communicate properly on how they deliver their ideas and thoughts into such good assertions.

Debating method proposes lots of valuable skills - awareness, logic, argument structure; but one of the most important things, helping young people to realize their opinions, ideas and thought have a place in the world. When you know that you express yourself respectfully and coherently, you actually gain self-belief because you realize there is no reason that others shouldn't be affording you the respect you precisely deserve. It is not only about sounding good in giving arguments, debating is also one of the few activities which is believed to establish genuine self-confidence. Regarding with the significance of using debate as strategy to increase the competence to speak has made big number of educational institutions and the government itself conducting many kinds of debating competitions either locally, nationally or even internationally. By doing this, the students are motivated to be able to speak English. Every school including vocational schools, polytechnics and universities are grateful to share, to learn and to practice this method to the students on the purpose of
upgrading their students critical thinking and speaking skills.

Conclusion

Any problems are noticed as challenges for surviving in the workforce of the global era will thoroughly stimulate the people especially the students in the high level of education to be more active in finding such a way to make them ready for every single condition. Two out of many kinds of abilities need to be owned by the people or prospective young workers, critical thinking and speaking proficiency, through accomplishing three years of study at the college. An updated teaching strategy would be more beneficial to reach the goal of overcoming these existence issues. Debating format will widely open more chances to the teachers to implement to the schools, they spread extended contribution toward preparing the students to be ready for any changes they are about to meet after graduating from the schools. The period of being students has come to an end and the term of being employees or workers would start very soon. The one who has prepared better would obviously get brighter chance to shine.

References


