



Uncover Creative Thinking Skills Development in Accelerated Class (case study: National plus school in north sulawesi, Indonesia)

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Abstract

Background. There were some ideas for accelerating Indonesia's K-12 education using alternative names to RSBI (Rintisan Sekolah Berbasis Internasional or Prepared International Standard School), which has already been proposed by law, such as accelerated classes or national schools plus. While this class charges a higher rate than the standard class, many parents hope that the English usage in class will accelerate their children's progress. On the other hand, it should develop critical thinking skills for students to differentiate an accelerated class from others.

Aims. This research aimed to find evidence and uncover the development of critical thinking skills in an accelerated class. The entire study took place in North Sulawesi, involving 19 schools across K-12 grades (from elementary to high school), and data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires.

Methods. This research employs a field study to collect data from entire schools that offer accelerated classes in North Sulawesi. Using the ex post facto method, which involves identifying something that has already occurred, we employed interviews, observation, and document study to gather all the necessary data. As mentioned previously regarding schools as objects, we attempted to delve deeper into these critical thinking skills in students, as well as in the teachers who take responsibility in class.

Conclusion. There are some critical key results from it, which are: (1) the assumption of accelerated class, between merely English usage or critical thinking skill, (2) teachers and students wish in creating critical thinking skill outcome from learning process, (3) teacher having difficulties in planning critical thinking skill effort in class, (4) students somehow want critical thinking skill is being held in accelerated class using proper learning process, and (5) good facility and English usage is not enough for accelerated class with such high rate.

Key Word : Creative Thinking Skills, Development , Accelerated Class



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as one of the ambitious developing countries, has many dreams for its educational progress. One of its dreams is to create a better generation in the future using accelerated education. Going back to 2011, some ideas were generated into a real-life program named RSBI (Rintisan Sekolah Berbasis Internasional or Prepared International Standard School). Although this RSBI was already abolished by law, it still appears in Indonesia's K-12 education under different names, such as accelerated class or national school plus.

Even though many researchers, both Indonesian and foreign, have already collected empirical evidence about this type of educational style, people still believe it can help their children achieve a better education for a brighter future. However, accelerated classes mostly conduct their classes using the English language in their learning process, thus the school would be stamped as "International Standard" and differentiate students from other "common schools" (Coleman, 2009a, 2009b). While these International Schools are becoming increasingly expensive, many parents continue to choose them, resulting in rapid growth and making Indonesia one of the countries with the highest number of international schools in Southeast Asia (Ginanjar, 2017; Nugraheni, 2018). However, the label of "International School" has already lost its permit based upon new rule which merely allow "International School" as school which has expatriate children inside it, With author [Click here to access/download; Title Page; Thinking Skill 18122019 - with author.pdf](#) not local students (Liauw, 2015; Mariati, 2007; Purnomo, 2012; Rinaldi & Saroh, 2016). Thus, many schools change their labels and create other forms, such as accelerated classes, inside their school.

On the other hand, others assumed that accelerated classes in school are not merely about teaching using English. However, they should leverage students' critical thinking skills. Teachers would be able to explore further innovative methods, rather than in a typical classroom setting, because one of the most important factors in educational success is the consistent inclusion of thinking skills (P. A. Facione, 2000). However, this assumption lacks supporting data, while many schools that claim to be accelerated schools already charge a higher rate compared to traditional schools. Many parents would love to pay more for this kind of class and hope their children will have a better education, a more effective learning process, and better skills than others (Ginanjar, 2017; Ipnugraha, 2013). However, it seems that they are confused when asked what kind of skills they hope their children will have.

While this phenomenon is still occurring in Indonesia, with various terms and definitions, many education experts are also questioning how these schools can truly accelerate students in any other way, rather than simply charging higher rates to parents (Herlinda, 2018). This acceleration still requires further explanation, whether it involves a deeper understanding of learning material, improved child development, or enhanced critical thinking skills. However, critical thinking skills remain a pressing issue in this accelerated class, as their rate is more costly compared to a standard class (Siregar, 2018).

While critical thinking is one of the essential skills that students should possess, it is also necessary for teachers (Ariyana, Pudjiastuti, Bestary, & Zamroni, 2018; Ginanjar, 2017; Mariati, 2007; Purnomo, 2012; Putri, 2010). Thus, teachers should also develop critical thinking skills before teaching students. This can be interpreted as suggesting that critical thinking is a skill that requires instruction and practice, not merely a standard learning process in class (Snyder & Snyder, 2008). So, it should focus on instructional strategies and assessment techniques rather than on using English as the students' primary language in class.

It means that critical thinking should be the primary reason why parents enroll their children in accelerated classes and pay more, rather than simply hoping that their children will learn English as the primary language in class (Purnomo, 2012; Rinaldi & Saroh, 2016). However, many researchers still believe (and even from a local government point of view) that accelerated classes in Indonesia (and some Asian countries, as well) (Coleman, 2009b) are crucial for differentiating "those students" from others.

Thus, this research aims to find evidence from schools that offer accelerated classes, examining whether they can truly enhance the learning process, particularly by fostering critical thinking skills, rather than merely focusing on English in their classes across all subjects. While most of the accelerated classes charge parents a higher rate, this research tried to conduct a sample survey and analyze whether it is really worth it for parents to put their children in accelerated classes, or if there should be another improvement for schools with such classes in order to make themselves as worthy as they advertised to the public.

This research was conducted in North Sulawesi, using the entire RSBI school as a sample of the accelerated class population at all levels of K-12 education, including elementary, junior high school, and high school. This research involves 19 schools, comprising 8 elementary schools,

5 junior high schools, and 6 high schools. We were trying to observe, as well as interview, and take some document samples to gather proper evidence, which will be analyzed later.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Thinking

From a philosophical point of view, the critical thinking skill itself can be considered one of the most ideal ways for a person, as it focuses on how they can achieve the best outcome in a given situation (Sternberg, 1986). It also stated that critical thinking should create students who can identify problems, clarify them, and understand and analyze them (Lai, 2011; Pithers & Soden, 2000). Thus, when students have critical thinking skills, they should be able to (1) analyze arguments and claim evidence, (2) give inductive or deductive reasoning, (3) also evaluate or judge, and (4) make decisions while solving problems comprehensively (P. A. Facione, 1990; Lai, 2011).

Critical thinking is essential because it leads students in problem-solving and should teach them “how to think” rather than “what to think,” which supports higher-order instructional design strategies (Snyder & Snyder, 2008). It also needs to change the teachers from a “teacher role” into a facilitator (Lai, 2011; Sternberg, 1986, 1987), which means that teachers in accelerated classes who want to develop critical thinking skills in their students truly should also adopt this role.

Critical thinking can also be achieved by changing its evaluation style in class, which starts questioning students with such questions: “What is my goal in learning this?”, “How is my progress?” and so on (N. C. Facione, Facione, & Giancarlo, 1994; P. A. Facione, 1990, 2000; Lai, 2011). Thus, it means that teachers should not use outdated evaluation styles, such as multiple-choice questions, common essays, or brief answers. They should create a problem-solving evaluation and based on a definite project throughout its learning process.

Critical thinking evaluation is considered in various ways by many researchers. Some using collaboration approach in its evaluation (Gokhale, 1995), or using CCTDI (California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory) which created by Facione (N. C. Facione et al., 1994; P. A. Facione, 1990, 2000), and also challenging students in for their ideas in identifying and analyzing problems (Ennis, 1993; Fisher, 2001; Pithers & Soden, 2000). These evaluations can not be done simultaneously, since all of them need a different approach by teachers, and it depends on the learning environment, as well as the students’ capabilities in the learning process.

So, teachers should choose what kind of evaluation. Critical thinking, as the primary purpose in an accelerated class, should also change its teachers' role and revolutionize its evaluation styles, while maintaining a focus on English usage in the class. However, it still needs empirical evidence, which will be explained later in this research. This evidence should serve as the foundation for suggestions on maintaining the learning process within the accelerated school itself.

METHOD

This research employs a field study to collect data from entire schools that offer accelerated classes in North Sulawesi. Using the ex post facto method, which involves identifying something that has already occurred, we employed interviews, observation, and document study to gather all the necessary data. As mentioned previously regarding schools as objects, we attempted to delve deeper into these critical thinking skills in students, as well as in the teachers who take responsibility in class.

Observations in this research took approximately 3–4 days for each school, which was conducted concurrently with the interview process. In observations, we attempted to sit in on the class and observe how the evaluation and learning process in the accelerated class unfolded daily. We also lightly interrupted the teacher in the middle of class, commonly during a short break, to conduct interviews with teachers and students. At the end of the observation process, we administered a questionnaire to confirm our conclusions, which will be explained later in this research.

DISCUSSION

Observations reveal a similarity among all schools that offer accelerated classes. Most of them are merely using the classical learning process (78%), which means they primarily focus on explaining concepts to students in class, using English as their primary language. Teachers and students also agreed that using English has already made them feel special and different from the “common class”. It means that they do not realize what the accelerated class's purpose is from the beginning, and are still focusing on language usage rather than the learning process or even the evaluation result. It also proves that English usage in K-12 schools has become a primary factor in

most parents' perspective on “more quality schools,” and they are willing to pay more for it (Coleman, 2009a; Siregar, 2018).

Another result from observation is that most teachers did not use any critical thinking evaluation effort in their learning process. While most of them merely use memorization as their main evaluation criterion for students, they rarely employ problem-based learning or project-based learning as their primary learning process. About 38% of teachers use memorization in their evaluation, and 41% use imitation in it, while the minority have already incorporated problem-based learning into their evaluation. Imitation in this context is commonly done by creating a project that has a guide from a textbook. This is undoubtedly a common misconception among teachers about project-based learning. It means that most teachers lack instructional design knowledge and commonly focus on their English skills in delivering learning material to accelerated class students.

The interview results have confirmed the previous observations in this research. An interview is being conducted with teachers, a sample of students, and the headmaster of the school. Most teachers (about 40%) believed that English usage and good class facilities (air conditioner, LCD projector, and comfortable chair and desk) are the main reasons for being an accelerated class, the rest of them believed that students' output (good result in final exam and decent English skill) is the main reason. It is similar to a headmaster's opinion when they are asked what the main reason is for becoming an accelerated class.

However, some students have different ideas of becoming part of an accelerated class. Nearly 50% of respondents believe that being in an accelerated class means they are on a different level compared to a standard class. Being different should be demonstrated by how well they solve problems in real life and how effectively they can gain a deeper understanding of the learning process. The rest of them, along with some minor voices, told us that an accelerated class is merely different in English usage and its facilities, rather than in the learning process and its evaluation. They are somehow satisfied with their different social level in school and society, and become accelerated class members.

While both teachers and students are asked about critical thinking skills, which include memorizing, analyzing, identifying problems, evaluating, judging, and making decisions about problems, most of them still struggle to understand this concept. Most teachers thought that the mentioned components of critical thinking are not entirely taught in accelerated classes. Although

most of them have good facilities that support the learning process of critical thinking skills, they rarely utilize them all. Teachers mostly thought (about 50%) that making decisions depends on students' ability and personality, and it cannot be taught inside the class. Thus, they did not believe that critical thinking skills are teachable among students in an accelerated class properly.

On the other hand, students had differing opinions about critical thinking skills in the accelerated class. While they were being informed about critical thinking skills during the interview process, most of them (more than 50%) agreed that critical thinking skills are essential for their future life skills. Especially for high school students who are mostly already thinking about college life, they realized that critical thinking is a highly recommended skill for them to acquire. Thus, this different point of view creates an invisible gap between teachers and students in an accelerated class. However, most students are not brave enough to express their wants to teachers in class. This attitude is caused by Indonesian culture, which is commonly very "polite" to older people (in this case, their teachers), creating this invisible gap.

The final step of this research is to distribute a questionnaire, which ensures that the observation and interview results align. The results of the questionnaire actually confirm what teachers and students have already stated in previous sessions. More than 80% of teachers in accelerated classes reported still using paper-and-pencil tests, which means they primarily focus on memorization and less on analysis and problem identification for in-class evaluation. Thus, there is actually no difference between the accelerated class and the standard class. However, teachers argue that this kind of test is being administered because of the Indonesian education system, which includes a final national exam (Ujian Nasional or national test) that features a multiple-choice format and focuses on memorization rather than analysis or problem identification.

Another result from the questionnaire is the development of critical thinking skills in the accelerated class. Most teachers said that developing critical thinking skills, which include implementing problem-based learning or even project-based learning, really need a careful and extended plan in their preparation. It is still taught using English as the primary language in class, which is not becoming their mother tongue and is not spoken daily. Therefore, it becomes more challenging for teachers to develop effective instructional design in an accelerated class.

From the same point of view, students are also hoping that their teachers implement different levels of learning processes. When they are given an explanation about critical thinking

skills, most students show their enthusiasm and wish that they could possess such a skill. However, most of their learning environment does not seem to support this skill development. On the other hand, they still want their teachers to create such a learning process to build critical thinking skills in them.

CONCLUSION

The accelerated class in Indonesia, which initially comes from RSBI, has created both a negative and a positive image among parents. Some said that an accelerated class merely yields a significant profit due to its expensive rate and does not provide any improvement beyond its English usage in class. Some others said that accelerated classes really create great students with their facilities and good learning process.

Assuming a high rate of accelerated class, many parents and the community are hoping that it will create critical thinking skills for students it. However, many assumptions and different points of view struggle without clear evidence. Although some researchers have already argued that English usage in classes in Asian countries is ineffective, there are still opinions against it. This research has already found partial evidence to support the claim that one assumption is correct. Whether English usage is enough already for an accelerated class, or critical thinking skills are more needed in the learning process.

However, this research tried to find empirical evidence in the field without subjective judgment about the accelerated class. While the field study, which took place in North Sulawesi, has already received its results, we can draw some conclusions from it. There are some important key results from it, which are: (1) the assumption of accelerated class, between merely English usage or critical thinking skill, (2) teachers and students wish in creating critical thinking skill outcome from learning process, (3) teacher having difficulties in planning critical thinking skill effort in class, (4) students somehow want critical thinking skill is being held in accelerated class using proper learning process, and (5) good facility and English usage is not enough for accelerated class with such high rate.

On the other hand, we can assume that teachers require proper training in creating a comprehensive plan for developing critical thinking skills in class. It also requires support from the headmaster, as the school authority, for it; thus, accelerated classes become significantly different. These evidences also require further field study on other accelerated classes, to determine

whether they have already tried different approaches for their own advantage in the learning process. It also requires proper research to elaborate on the roles of teachers and students in order to foster critical thinking skills in them.

Thus, we can also give some suggestions for school with accelerated class based upon this research, which are: (1) there should be further training for teachers to create instructional design for critical thinking skill, (2) role change for teachers, from information source into facilitator to let students improve their critical thinking, (3) English usage perhaps not becoming most important factor for accelerated class output, while most students do not really want it and on the other hand parents merely pay higher rate just for their pride.

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