Learning Articulation through Scientific Discussion with Social Movement Actors to Improve Learners’ Characteristics as Social Change Agents

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Abstract—This article aims to explore learning articulation as a part of learning culture through scientific discussion with social movement actors that can improve the learner characteristics as a social change agent. This study uses a qualitative approach from the articulation theory perspective. The data collection was done through participant observation, documentation and literature study. The research findings show that the learning culture of learning articulation by scientific discussions involving social movement actors can be an alternative learning model that opens up the critical thinking of learners oriented to assist the process of value internalization and strengthening the character of social science students as agents of social change. This critical thinking development through articulation learning allows learners to: 1) communicate knowledge and insight through the conceptual horizon and actual cases that occur in their social environment, 2) learn the real picture of social movement practices from social actors 3) appreciate (confirmation, criticism and elaboration) facts related to social movements, 4) experience awareness initiatives to directly and actively engage in social movements.

Keywords—Learning Articulation, Social Movement Actor, Social Change Agent, Context

I. INTRODUCTION

Strengthening the character of learners is one of the latest and crucial issues in educational discourse in today's globalization era [1]–[4]. The Higher Education, as a strategic institution, faces a complex challenge in constructing and reconstructing innovative learning that enables students as learners to have competencies in accordance with their scientific discipline as well as to shape a character that can critically adapt and contribute in line with the context of the ever-moving era. Colleges that have the faculty of social sciences and humanities have a perennial problem, namely to internalize the dialectic between the theoretical/conceptual realm and social reality into the learning activities of the learners.

As an intellectual exercise to address the issue, this article aims to explore the use of the articulation theory initiated by Stuart Hall in one of the courses in the Faculty of Social Sciences of Universitas Negeri Malang, i.e. Social Praxis. The choice of articulation theory in this study is made for this theory is rarely applied as a tool of analysis of learning activities. Research on cultural studies and social sciences that uses the theory of articulation gives more concern to issues about identity, media, popular culture, power, representation and youth culture [5]–[7]. In this study, the articulation theory initiated by Hall can be applied not only to analyze but also to construct the learning activities in accordance with the objectives of the course. In addition, the study also explores the use of dialogic learning models that have been applied by experts both to improve language competence [8] and to build awareness [9]. However, no attempts have been made to internalize values and strengthen the characters of social science students as agents of social change.

II. METHOD

The objective of this research is the use of scientific discussions as one of the learning methods articulated to study the concept of social movement as one of the main elements of the Social Praxis course in disciplinary science of sociology/sociology education. Scientific discussion was conducted by presenting three actors of social movement who are intensively involved in the case of a conflict in Umbul Gemulo water source in Batu. The research was conducted in Malang, East Java. Specifically, the research was conducted in the Auditorium of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Universitas Negeri Malang (FIS UM) as a place for scientific discussions. The selection of research sites is made under the consideration of easy access to the implementation of scientific discussion activities and efficiency in the use of budget.

The subjects of the study were the participants of the scientific discussion consisting of students of Sociology Education, Faculty of Social Science, Universitas Negeri Malang, who took Social Praxis course, the social actors involved in Umbul Gemulo spring social movement, and the lecturer who teaches Social Praxis course. The participants and moderators involved in the scientific discussions are mostly
sociology education students. Most of the student had taken or were taking the Social Praxis course. The number of the research subjects is 276 participants.

The techniques of data collection consisted of participant observation, documentation, and literature study. Observation of participation was conducted during a scientific discussion activity with the theme of "Learning Social Movement from Social Actor of Umbul Gemulo Case" on 29 April 2017. Documentation was done by taking pictures and recording the scientific discussion with voice recorder. Literature study was conducted to collect data related to the history of Umbul Gemulo social movement in Batu, East Java, and references about learning culture, articulation theory, and social movements.

The data analysis in this study was in accordance with the articulation theory that specifically analyzes how individuals or groups of individuals with different backgrounds interconnect with other individuals or groups in arranging ideas or properties to fulfill their interests and goals.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this research, learning is interpreted as a cultural activity. In such definition, learning is constructed by various interrelated elements. Curtis and Pettigrew [10] stated that learning is a cultural activity. Learning encounters do not take place in a vacuum or when teachers train to teach, students are enrolled in school, policy makers and professional experts design curricula and course materials. Thus, in this study, learning as a cultural activity means an arena of the struggle and negotiation of plural actors. Curtis and Pettigrew's view asserts that learning is a cultural activity constructed by various elements. The notion of learning as a cultural activity constructed by these various elements is relevant to be explored by theories of articulation initiated by cultural study experts such as Lawrence Grossberg and Stuart Hall.

Articulation theory is a critical perspective used by cultural theorists to conceptualize, analyze, and simultaneously participate in shaping the world [11]. Referring to this understanding, researchers who use the theory of articulation do not only use this perspective as a tool of analysis to examine a phenomenon, but also to involve in conceptualizing and constructing the reality.

According to Hall, articulation is “…the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? The so-called ‘unity’ of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary ‘belongingness.’ The ‘unity’ which matters is a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected [12]”

“The unity formed by this combination or articulation, is always, necessarily, a ‘complex structure’: a structure in which things are related, as much through their differences as through their similarities. This requires that the mechanisms which connect dissimilar features must be shown—since no necessary correspondence’ or expressive homology can be assumed as given. It also means—since the combination is a structure (an articulated combination) and not a random association—that there will be structured relations between its parts, i.e., relations of dominance and subordination [13].”

The term “articulation” by Hall means expression and merging, where text and cultural practice do not have a fixed meaning because it is influenced by the articulation process which is contextual and varied. Context has an effect on expression. In this research, learning as a cultural activity has many aspects in the sense that it can be articulated differently by different people in different contexts that are based on different considerations. The meaning is in the form of a social product not universal. A text, practice, or an event does not bring its own meaning, but there are certain parties who give them meanings in accordance with their interests [14]. Referring to such understanding, the articulation of Social Praxis course by incorporating scientific discussions is a purpose-oriented construct, namely the internalization of values and the reinforcement of the characters of social science students as agents of social change.

According to Smith [15], the complex structures in character building education include a. general school environment and atmosphere; b. influence of administrators and teachers; c. the use of the regular curriculum; d. orientation, guidance, and adjustment efforts; e. appeals (either to groups or to individuals) to reason and to commonsense; f. student participation in the classroom, school, or school and community affairs; g. habit-forming experiences in the classroom, in the school building, or at the playground; and h. a planned and incidental emphasis on character traits, ideals, and moral principles.

In this study, the idea of establishing consciousness or internalization of social science students’ values in order to build the characters needed as agents of social change is interpreted as the involvement of researchers by triggering and practicing learning innovation in a dialogic way using scientific discussion that involves the actors of the Umbul Gemulo social movement in Batu. It is in good agreement with Hall's view that articulation thinking is always associated with the unifying practice of differences or differences in unification [16]. In this case, the articulation of learning is not as seen by Piaget but as an interactive process in which development occurs in tandem with and in response to the context of learning [8].

The dialogic learning model in this study was also inspired by Paulo Freire's thoughts on dialogue. According to Freire [9], the essence of dialogue is a word. In this context, word means as an action and reflection. A word without action only leads to verbalism, while action without reflection will lead to activism. This dialectic activity involving the continuous action and reflection is called as praxis. The important of student reflection on social and moral issues as one main key in character education has been proven by many studies that were highlighted [17]. Simultaneously, Strike [18] stressed that “education is an initiation into practices and the communities...
that sustain them. The initiation into these communities involves learning norms and good values that contribute to the development of a sense of justice. Based on the ideas from Freire, Berkowitz and Bier, and Strike mentioned above, it can be stated that character building of the sociology students as agents of social change ideally combine practice with reflection. In other word, as Bushman suggested [19] “In composition as well, we must encourage students to express themselves about their concerns, to speak out against injustices as they see them and not to be silent about what they think and feel. Students need to question and then to respond.”

IV. RESULTS

The course and the method of learning as viewed from the theory of the perspective of articulation is a text or practice that does not bring its own meaning, but constructed by certain parties that give meaning to it in accordance with its importance, and historical and cultural contexts. In addition, the construction of this course is also influenced by other various elements such as vision and mission of universities and faculties, the availability of material resources and infrastructure supporting processes, and learning activities. Thus, Social Praxis as a course has a complex structure.

The process of constructing the Social Praxis course as one of the Faculty's Courses (subject that must be taken by all students in all study programs in the Faculty of Social Science of UM) begins with workshop activities involving some lecturers from all departments in the faculty in 2014. In this context, workshop is a space of debate and negotiation of the participants in articulating the name of the course, time allocation of lectures, and the syllabus.

Participants involved in the Social Praxis course articulation are the elements of a complex structure. Lecturers as participants who are involved in discussions, debates, or consensus in the course construction are individuals who have multiple identities in terms of ethnicity, religion, age, academic experience, gender, and scientific background. In addition, the participants also have varied interests, creativity, and social networking capacities. Even though they come from pluralistic identities, participants have the opportunity to unite ideas to produce the constructions of the Social Praxis course in the form of dynamic and cultural texts and practices.

The construction of the negotiations and debates is then put into the catalog of each study program. Every lecturer who handles Social Praxis course refers to the catalog. Praxis Social course syllabus contained in the catalog is viewed from the theory of articulation as a complex structure in the form of a unification of various elements that have a specific meaning in accordance with the context.

The subject of Social Praxis in the catalog of Sociology Education Program refers to the following description: "Contains students' projects to work together with the communities in solving the problems faced by a particular society. Specifically, this course contains specific formulations of the issues, data of causes and resources to address the problem, alternative ways of problem solving, the most feasible solution, action plan, awareness and advocacy, action implementation, impact of the action, and reporting/communication".

The targeted competencies of this course are: "Students are able to participate in solving the society's problems through dialectic activities between conceptual-theoretical insight and the social reality under the procedure as follow: problem identification, data collection, preparation of alternative solutions, selection of solutions, compilation of action plans, awareness and advocacy, execution of action, assessment and reflection, and reporting; with collaboration among supervisors, students (across departments), social groups, government and / or the business world ".

The articulation of the implementation of the learning activities undertaken by each lecturer, as well as the construction of this course which has a complex structure, is influenced by various elements. Therefore, the implementation of the learning conducted by each lecturer is unique in the sense that it will never be the same and concurrent with others. It is because each lecturer has a different identity in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, religion, and education. In addition, each lecturer also has the interests, considerations, and individual creativity in carrying out the learning process. All these aspects are various elements incorporated in a complex structure called as the articulation of learning.

One of the articulations of innovative learning conducted in this course is aimed to perform a scientific discussion that presents the actors of social movements in Umbul Gemulo water source conflict. The three speakers presented in this discussion are from the young leader of the village community who are intensely involved in the social movement of Umbul Gemulo, a non-governmental organization (NGO) of Walhi East Java who advocates for the citizens, and a female activist who becomes a lawyer for the villagers around Umbul Gemulo, Batu City. Before the discussion began, all participants watched a short documentary movie of some water conflicts from 2011 to 2016 involving communities incorporated in the Forum Masyarakat Peduli Mata Air /FMPMA (Water Source Social Forum), The Rayja Hotel Corporations, and Batu City Government. The water conflicts triggered the social movements of the community in FMPMA against the Rayja Hotel Corporation under which the resort is run, and the Government of Batu City that permitted the construction of the hotel.

After watching the documentary movie, the informants took turn in conveying their experiences while being engaged in the social movements to preserve the Umbul Gemulo Water Source of which sustainability is threatened by the construction of a hotel located at just 150 meters above the spring. The three speakers have different backgrounds in terms of education, profession, gender, and age. The speaker from Walhi, Purnawan, gave explanations to the discussion participants about Walhi and his role in advocating the social movement of the majority of the community consisting of the residents of Umbul Gemulo. Purnawan explained about the chronology of the water conflict in preserving Umbul Gemulo Water Source and presented various facts about the violation against various rules and regulations done by The Rayja corporation in building the hotel and the maladministration practices done by
the Government of Batu City in the procedure of providing documents in relation to the development of the hotel. Regarding the advocacy conducted by Walhi in the social movement, Purnawan explained various forms of legal, meta legal, and extra legal advocacy.

The second speaker, Aris, is a young figure from Cangar, Bulukerto village (where Umbul Gemulo is located). He described the role of the youth in this social movement. The role of youth occupies a central position in designing and implementing the various articulations of the social movements. Collective actions and the struggle to maintain the spring which is the only water source for household and agricultural needs of the villagers require a high dedication because the case of the water conflict lasted relatively long (5 years). Therefore, the main actors in this social movement are predominantly young people while the older generation has limitations due to age and they are also preoccupied by their responsibility for fulfilling their families’ economic needs. In addition, the young generation has the creativity, and technology innovation and information literacy, all of which are very important for social movements in this globalization and digitization era. Through various creative movements designed by the local youth and NGO activists, various forms of collective action articulations are constructed, such as doing social movements (various forms of demos / actions on the streets), political movements (nominating young leaders in the level of local politics up to the arena of Batu mayoral election) and cultural movements (transforming the local traditions of slametan sumber (preservation of springs) in the form of water festivals that have been held over the past five years.

While the third speaker, Fifi, a female activist from Sekolah Perempuan Desa (the School of Village Women) as well as a lawyer for the local residents in both criminal and civil litigation by Rayja Hotel Corporation. The rhetoric and material presented by Fifi amazed the participants. The participants were given awareness of the impact of the water conflict that was greater on women than men as women needed more water than men. The speaker also presented about the various roles of women in the community movement regarding the Umbul Gemulo case. Another important thing that Fifi delivered was her criticism for the community movement that did not involve women in the decision-making because the meetings held by the community always lasted late at night so women could not participate in these activities.

The dialog session that took place after the informants delivered their experiences was interesting and lasted longer than planned. The first question given by a student for Purnawan is as follows:

"Students are now starting to be apathetic, they no longer care about whatever decision made by the government. Most of us are just silent because we've been indoctrinated not to participate in a demonstration from the beginning ….we do not need to act if the government never hear anything we say. Why do we do this action? ... Well.. Please enlighten us about the reason why we should do the action for months, we are prevented and lazy to do any actions. Please give enlightenment so that the students who follow this action will not be apathetic.”

In respond to the question, Purnawan stated that a student of Sociology Education Program should have the consciousness about becoming the agents of social change, and not to become a part of social problem. Therefore, Purnawan suggested the students to be involved in an organization in order to take the real action of being the agents of social change.

Another participant who had seen the condition of the Gemulo Water Source and the surrounding buildings during the field lectures some time ago asked about two things to Purnawan and Aris as follow:

"The first question we want to ask is about Gemulo Water Source condition. When we went to the field yesterday, we noticed that many hotels other than The Rayja Hotels are mushrooming around the Umbul Gemulo. How the youth should respond so that Umbul Gemulo can be preserved? The second question is how should the young men act to keep Gemulo Gemulo other than holding a demonstration? How creative it should be? When we were here yesterday Umbul Gemulo was still dirty and lacked of maintenance, well, what should the youth do to conserve the Umbul Gemulo Water Source so that the community can utilize the clean water?"

Purnawan and Aris answered those two critical questions as follow: In the case of the hotels that are built around the Umbul Gemulo Water Source before the case of the Rayja Hotel, Purnawan stated that such hotels are still allowed because the construction is done when there is no law that prohibited the construction of hotels around Umbul Gemulo. What should be done now is to prevent more hotel construction around the spring.

The second question of the condition of the Umbul Gemulo that is dirty and lacks of maintenance and the need of youth creativity addressing these issues besides a demonstration was answered by Aris that the number of people who care about the cleanliness of Umbul Gemulo is relatively not much. However, the local youth has a big role in maintaining the cleanliness of the springs. Aris said that there had been a case of a government agency that install a poultry cage above the Umbul Gemulo which contaminate the water in
Umbul Gemulo, where at that time the youth immediately demanded that the cage was moved and the agency responded well. Another creative movement conveyed by Aris as the leader of Nawak Alam Organization (local youth organization that care about the environment in Batu) is preserving the environment in Batu, which include the Umbul Gemulo spring by developing awareness of the community through a Water Festival event that transforms the traditional ritual called slametan sumber (preservation of spring). Such event attracted more people and more various societies, especially the young generation. Such activity was a form of the local youth’s creativity in collaboration with Walhi and various parties who care about saving the environment in Batu.

There was also a student who asked about the transparency of the court proceedings in relation to the Umbul Gemulo case, as can be seen from the quote below:

"First, I want to ask Mr. Purnawarman to please explain about the results of the first and second trial that I saw on the internet. The community won the case in the first trial but the Rayja hotel won the second trial. Was there any transparent evidence and why the court stated that The Rayja won the case when it was clear in that chapter that The Rayja had violated such a law. The second question was about Mr. Aris initial statement that the event moved the youth around Umbul Gemulo. I was very curious, how many people were moved? Is it possible to mobilize the residents around Umbul Gemulo alone? Please tell me about it".

To answer question about the court case of Umbul Gemulo, Purnawan explained several things. The Gemulo Umbul case is a tremendous process of struggle from the community because at the time of the verdict, one citizen who was leading the social movement demanded by the corporation requested that the judge presiding over the trial of the case should be the one who has an environmental certification. The Gemulo Umbul case is a new history of justice in Indonesia because it is only in this case that the court uses an environmentally certified judge. The request to use this environmentally-certified judge had an impact on the victory of the citizens both in Malang State Court and in Surabaya High Court. On the other hand, at the time of appeal at the Supreme Court (MA), the judge who handled the case of Umbul Gemulo precisely did not possess any environmental background. As a result, the Supreme Court's decision gives a series of results for the corporations and citizens.

In relation to the question of how to mobilize many people to engage in social movements, Aris responded that local youth uses local organizations such as sinoman and karang taruna (local institution and youth local organization) as means of social movements. There is a difference in the way of thinking between the old generation and young generation in looking at the hotel development. Old generation thinks more simply that the new hotels will contribute in their local events such as the Independence Day commemoration. Differently, young people think that the construction of the hotel will give negative impact for the sustainability of the springs for the next generations. Based on such reason, the local young people began to move through sinoman and karang taruna organizations and involve the community to make a movement to stop the construction of hotels that will damage Umbul Gemulo springs.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of the participant observation performed during the discussion and the observation of the transcript recorded during the discussion presented that the articulation of learning by combining scientific discussion as one element of learning activities have some interesting facts to be discussed. First, students can gain insights into the social conflict (one of the central themes in the field of sociology) through actual and factual cases occurring in their social environment. It is a social fact that there are still relatively few academicians in Malang or East Java who are not aware of the biggest social conflict cases that have ever occurred in the history of Batu related to the problem of hotel development near with the springs. In general, the academic community who has heard about this Umbul Gemulo case only knows about this problem at a glance or not comprehensively.

Second, students can learn through real experiences by doing social movements practiced by the social actors involved in the case of Umbul Gemulo in Batu. Even though social movements do not have to be done through a conflict, students can learn various matters related to the complexity of the problems that exist in the case of Umbul Gemulo such as: public policy in territorial arrangement to avoid conflict, ecological crisis that occurred in Batu, advocacy done by NGO to society who became the victims of development, the struggle
of the villagers around Umbul Gemulo who collaborated with some NGO activists and various parties in defending the springs threatened by the political economy power of the city government and hotel corporations, and the role of youth and women in Umbul Gemulo social movement. Knowing some experience directly up to the real details from the social movement actors certainly provides a different learning experience compared by simply reading Sociology textbooks that address the topic of social movements and conflicts. Articulation of learning through scientific discussions with the real actors of social movements allows students to directly discuss various matters related to the case. Students cannot get such experience by learning through textbooks. In addition, the articulation of learning by holding discussions that involve social movement actors can cover the shortage of Social Praxis subject lecturers who do not necessarily know the details and real cases of Umbul Gemulo.

Third, students can confirm, appreciate and elaborate the facts related to the social movement or other related issues or have similarities with the case of Umbul Gemulo in accordance with the knowledge and experience they obtained from the discussions. From the explanations given to answer several questions from the students for the speakers as mentioned above, it can be seen that the discussion opened a critical thinking space where students needed to engage in dialogue in through cross checking fact and intellectual odyssey (confirmation and appreciation) between their insights of knowledge and the subjective facts and experiences presented by the actors of social movement. The critical thinking space opened through this dialogic articulation of learning enables the students through to use the intellectual odyssey to perform various insightful elaborations as seen from the activeness of the students who questioned the case of the water resource preservation in their region. The learning process that develops through dialogue between learners and social movers is in good agreement with a statement made by Morgan and Cain [8]:

"Students can legitimately speak in discussions of their environment, where they can learn from each other. If one accepts an idea of a dialog: that understanding is built up over a range of contexts through interaction with different people”

Fourth, through the articulation of the learning of this dialogic model, the activists exposed the students to the consciousness process regarding the importance of social movements and to be motivated in engaging the real and active practices as agents of social change. Although the process of consciousness is not simple and easy because it involves many factors and takes a long time, the articulation of learning using a dialogic model with actors involved in social movements can be an effective alternative to open the door of the learners’ consciousness.

Designing and performing social movements is a learning process that should be undertaken by students who pursue social sciences, whether through courses that are part of the curriculum or on personal awareness initiatives. The problem is that most students are still rarely involved in social movements. Frequently, social science students have not been or are not interested or even assume the unimportance of doing social movements, as stated by one of the students above. This condition reflects some of the gloomy portraits of the social science students’ consciousness about the significance of the social movement. Through the articulation of the dialogic learning, social actors can give an element of the complex structure called as the consciousness process, i.e. social science students are enlightened to be part of a social problem solving activity or agents of social change, and not just become part of the social problem itself. The consciousness of being social science students is synonymous with being in the process of becoming [9] social change agents. It is actually a vital aspect in strengthening the characters and social identities of the social sciences students.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Articulation of learning as a text and cultural practice does not contain a fixed meaning because it is influenced by the articulation process which is contextual and varied. Thus, expressions are always influenced by contexts. Text and cultural practice have many aspects in the sense that they can be articulated differently by different people in different contexts under different considerations.

The incorporation of scientific discussions in the process of articulation in the Social Praxis course taken by the lecturers through the involvement of social movement actors as speakers has opened the students’ critical thinking space to share their experiences conducting social projects with the experiences of the activists who are directly and tangibly involved in social movements. Articulation of learning is flowing and having various possible formations of a complex structure that is relevant to the changing time. Innovative learning in terms of articulation theory is the expression and incorporation of creative novelty into an unstable complex structure. Innovative learning will never stop in an articulation, but always make dialectics so that there is a continuous re-articulation process in accordance with the context. The Social Praxis course provides a space of negotiation where many learning innovations are possible to be combined and expressed so as to elicit innovative learning articulations.

Based on such view, this article formulates the theoretical argument that the articulation of learning activities involves the struggle and negotiations between various forces / actors that enable the occurrence of conceptual dialectics and practices, as well as the process of strengthening the characters of learners that will continuously develop in accordance with the context. Strengthening the characters of social sciences students as agents of social change is a long process that needs to be supported by presenting various articulation alternatives that enable learners to enter and participate in activities that require critical thinking.

This study has a weakness in the methodological aspect for it only collects data from the implementation of scientific discussions, without conducting in-depth interviews on the students who were involved in the activity. The implication problem of this research is that the researchers did not collect the students’ opinions on the contribution of the learning model in strengthening their characters as agents of social change. The recommendation that can be given for future research is to gather the students’ view about the contribution of articulation
of learning scientific discussion with social movement actors in strengthening their characters as agents of social change.

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