The Role of School Culture in the Development of Characters in Elementary School

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This study aims to describe the planning, implementation, evaluation, and the role of school culture in the character development of students in Elementary School. This study used a qualitative approach with a case-study design. Data was collected by observation, in-depth interviews, document studies. The results of the study indicated that character development through school culture was designed as an implementation of school vision, mission, and branding. The values of religious character are carried out through the habit of reading *Asmaul Husna*, reciting and reading and writing Alqur'an, dhuha, dzuhur, and Friday joint prayers; the value of the nationalist character by habituating ceremonies every Monday, singing national songs and folk songs; independent character values through habituation of literacy, entrepreneurship, and conversation; the value of mutual cooperation characters by habituating clean Friday, class pickets, fire suppression simulations, and entrepreneurship; character integrity values through the introduction of health problems, simulations, entrepreneurship and extra-curricular activities.

Keywords: *culture, character values, elementary students*

I. INTRODUCTION

Character education is one of the educational programs currently being promoted by the government. Character education means a growing discipline with the deliberate attempt to optimise the students' ethical behavior (Agboola & Tsai, 2012). The launching of the Character Education Strengthening (PPK) program is intended to realise the national mental revolution movement (GNRM). The main aspect of the character education program is strengthening the character of students in a holistic and integrative manner, supporting parents and the surrounding community, developing local wisdom and 21ˢᵗ century skills, being fair and inclusive, and being in line with the development of students (Law No. 87 of 2017). Strengthening this kind of character education is also carried out in various countries in the world. In England, character values applied in schools are honesty, kindness, community service orientated, curiosity, creativity, perseverance, and hard work (Arthur et al., 2015), while in South Korea the values are courtesy, filial piety, honesty, responsibility, respect, communication, wisdom, integrity, courage, simplicity and cooperation (Park, 2017). The contents of the character values instilled in students in Indonesia through PPK are: religious, nationalist, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity.

Character education includes a broad range of concepts such as positive school culture (Pala, 2011). Culture originating from the *Sansekerta* language namely "buddhayah", is a plural form of Buddhi (sense or reason) and is defined as things that have a connection with the mind, and human reason (Kuntjaraningrat, 1998:9). Character in the large dictionary of the Indonesian language (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016), means as mind, common sense and customs. Character also means a whole series of positive traits that cross culture and apply throughout history to create a good life (Park, 2004), whereas according to Lance (2010), character is a characteristic that distinguishes someone from others, and character is formed through a continuous teaching process, Maunah (2015), Judiani (2010). Formation of student character in schools can be done through classroom learning, daily activities in the form of school culture, habituation, co-curricular activities and extra-curricular activities. Supraptiningrum & Agustini (2015) add that all of that is done continuously, consistently, and spontaneously through modeling the behaviour and attitudes of teachers. Cultural values will appear in symbols, slogans, mottos, vision and mission, or something that seems to be a basic reference to the motto of an environment (Wardani, 2015).

Previous research results showed that by having good characters, students can improve and implement the moral values and noble character, and then apply them in life (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). It also enables them to make responsible decisions (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999) and realise the rights and duties of a good citizen (Çubukçu, 2012; McElmel, 2002).

School culture can be interpreted as a way of the school community to do things based on shared beliefs, rituals, organisational ceremonies, and communication patterns in schools (Roach, 2004). School culture is a shared orientation system consisting of core values, norms, and

assumptions that are owned by school members and provides a separate identity for a school. School culture is one of the most complex and important concepts in education (Stoll, 1998).

Although school culture is important in helping students develop good character, many schools still do not use it well. Therefore,research was done on "The Role of School Culture in Student Character Development in Primary Schools is necessary to do". This study aimed to describe the school culture planning process, implementation, evaluation process, and the role of school culture in character development of students in primary school.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach is used in this study, because the focus of this research is on the process, implementation and development of a program in schools by in depth and detailed information about clients (education stakeholders in elementary schools) and programs, namely student character improvement programs in elementary school. This research is also called naturalistic inquiry (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) because researchers often want events related to the focus of research to appear naturally. Naturalistic inquiry is identified as a paradigm of inquiry that aligns with the worldview and serves as a useful paradigm for observing phenomena, collecting and analysing data, and presenting transferable findings regarding to experiential pedagogy (Perry & Perry, 2017). The use of the naturalistic inquiry approach was based on the reason that this study describes data or a symptom that is natural or naturalistic. The data described are the school cultures and their role in character improvement or development for students in elementary school. The research subject consisted of elements: the principal, teachers, students, school committee, parent association, and parents of students.

The stages of conducting research are carried out in stages: identifying topics or research focus; review literature; determining the role of the researcher; establishing relationships with the field, and maintaining good relations with the research site; formulating qualitative research questions; choosing participants; collecting data; processing and interpreting data. The types of data obtained are of two kinds, namely, primary data and secondary data. Primary data came from school documents, school observations, and interviews with school stakeholders, regarding school culture and its role in improving character for elementary school students. While secondary data came from the Education Office regarding the description of the condition of Malang City, including the conditions of education, the profile of elementary schools in Malang City, and student achievement data. Several methods were used in data collection : there are in-depth interviews, observation, and literature studies (Jamshed, 2014). The results of the data were analysed to provide an overview of this study.

The data in this study were analysed by qualitative analysis techniques with stages: preparing and organising data, reviewing and recording researchers' thoughts, coding, drawing

conclusions, and writing research reports. Qualitative analysis was used to examine the interview transcripts and derive fundamental categories that summarised the underlying thematic structure (Cupchick & Hilscher, 2008). After the data had been prepared and reviewed, the next step was analysing data from raw data into meaningful concepts. After that, the analysis was carried out in more depth and texture was added to the concepts that had been identified. Furthermore, inductive conclusions were carried out, namely from the construction that had been formed and its interaction with the data source reconstructed into the overall meaning. Based on these conclusions, an interpretation of the findings of the research was conducted. Interpretation also related to linking the findings of this study with the results of previous published studies or theoretical frameworks. Finally, the final stage of data analysis was writing research results (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), which were presented in narrative form.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A. Results

Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that in general the implementation of PPK in elementary school had been planned. The planning program is carried out through various activities that integrate character values as expected in the 2013 curriculum. The results of the study covering the planning, implementation and assessment of PPK are presented as follows.

1. PPK Planning in Primary School

Based on the exposure of data collected through observation, interviews and a study of documentation, it was found that: planning for the implementation of PPK in primary school, had been designed systematically, periodically, and carried out at the beginning of the semester. Planning is prepared based on the PPK technical guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, that refer to the principles of character development, namely: universal moral values; holistic, integrated and participatory local wisdom, 21st century readiness, being fair and inclusive, in line with student development, and able to be measured. Planning is structured thoroughly, which contains five main characters, namely: Religious, Nationalist, Independence, Integrity, and Mutual Cooperation. PPK planning is structured by utilising existing resources in schools and participation from outside institutions that have already established cooperative ties with schools. Participating institutions include: Bimbel institutions, Royal ATK, firefighters, Puskesmas, Hilo milk producers, Brawijaya University Malang, and Fiber Castle companies. PPK planning through school culture is designed as an implementation of the school's Vision, Mission and branding that reads "National Standard Schools, Taste International without Forgetting Local Culture".

2. Implementation of School Culture

The character formation and development program as a school culture is carried out through habituation in daily life in the education unit. The implementation of the school culture as a whole, is applied in accordance with the programs that have been prepared in the planning. From the results of observations and interviews, findings were obtained: (1) The values of

religious character, carried out through the habit of reading Asmaul Husna, reading short letters of "juz amma", reciting and reading the Qur'an, Dhuha prayers, Dzuhur prayer in congregation, Friday prayers in congregation at Jami mosque 'Malang and Friday charity. (2) Nationalist character values are carried out through the habituation of ceremonies every Monday and commemoration of major holidays, singing national songs at the beginning of each lesson and folk songs at the end of each lesson and commemorating national holidays filled with relevant activities. (3) Independent character values carried out through literacy habits every morning at the beginning of learning, entrepreneur-ship every 2nd Saturday, *pachelaton* (Javanese language conversations), conversations every Tuesday and Wednesday. Extra-curricular activities are according to choice every Friday after Friday prayers. Whereas scout activities as a compulsory extracurricular, are carried out every Thursday after the second break. (4) *Gotong Royong* (mutual cooperation) character values are carried out by habituation on Friday (Clean Friday), class pickets, ceremonial officers, fire suppression simulations, and entrepreneurship. (5) Character Values of Integrity are carried out through the introduction of health problems, fire suppression simulations, entrepreneurship and extra-curricular activities.

From the habituation done above, it illustrates that character values in primary school have been optimally developed through various well-planned and programmed activities.

3. Evaluation of PPK Implementation Results through School Culture

Evaluation activities are carried out to determine whether or not the planned program has been implemented. From the results of interviews with informants and the study of evaluation results, the findings were obtained: (1) Evaluation of the program's implementation was carried out at the end of the semester, along with coordination meetings for PPK planning arrangements with the appointed class coordinator. (2) Evaluation of student activities related to habituation in daily life in educational units, was carried out in the form of attitude assessment. Attitude assessment is carried out by peers and teachers by referring to the available guidelines.

B. Discussion

A strategic plan is needed to achieve optimal results for each activity program. The success of a strategic plan is directly dependent on how it is implemented (Johnson, 2013; Cheng, 2013). Likewise, an effort has to be made to implement character values that are integrated in school culture. According to Safitri (2012:52) the first step in implementing character education is to design and formulate the characters who want to be taught to students. At the beginning of the semester, the school always coordinated to design character development activities through school culture. Planning needs to be made so that goals can be achieved effectively and efficiently. In addition, with systematic planning, it will be easier for teachers to carry out school programs more optimally. This statement is in line with Majid's opinion (2007:22), that planning plays an important role in guiding teachers to carry out tasks as educators in serving their students' learning needs.

Good planning can be used as a benchmark for the quality of a program designed for future activities. Planning is not only a teacher's guideline in carrying out an activity, but also used to prepare facilities and professional instructor staff to support the success of an activity. The drafted plan refers to the PPK Technical Instruction that is sourced from the 2013 curriculum. In the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 57 of 2014, it was explained that the 2013 curriculum is to prepare Indonesian people to have the ability to live as individuals and citizens who are faithful, productive, creative, innovative and affective and able to contribute to life in the world, nation, state and civilisation.

From the results of the study of the design of character development activities' programs that are integrated in school culture, it is known that the school's vision and mission are elaborated. Depending on the vision and mission of the school, as put forward in the strategic planning, specific goals and objectives may be formulated to improve the effectiveness of the school. These goals and objectives will have an influence on the ability of the school to successfully implement the plan (Le Roux, 2002).

In the school's vision and mission, it was explained that the school's vision is: The realisation of students who are intelligent, superior, and care about the environment. While the mission is: (1) Increasing faith and devotion to the Almighty God, as well as being noble (spiritually smart/cultivate the heart); (2) Increasing awareness and insight in the life of the community, nation, state (social smart/feeling); (3) Instill scientific thinking and behaving habits that are critical, creative and independent (intellectual/intellectual thinking); (4) Improve the ability to express and appreciate beauty and harmony (emotional intelligence); (5) Increase physical potential and instill sportsmanship, and awareness of a clean and healthy life (kinesthetic smart); (6) Carrying out active, innovative, creative, effective and fun learning; (7) Increasing the professionalism of school principals, teachers and education staff; (8) Producing graduates who are of quality and have insight into their nationality; (9) Creating a clean and beautiful school environment as a learning resource; (10) Cultivate the habit of maintaining cleanliness and preserving the environment; (11) Prevent environmental pollution and principled living 5R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Replace, and Replant). The formulation of the vision and mission above seems very comprehensive. If referring to the competencies in the 2013 curriculum which focus on achieving four core competencies (KI), namely Spiritual Competencies (KI-1), Social Competencies (KI-2), Knowledge Competencies (KI-3), and Skills Competencies (KI-4), then the primary school has fulfilled the four core competencies. This is reflected in its detailed and operational mission.

Planning made by involving various parties and referring to the school's vision and mission is the first step towards success. According to Akbar (2014:143), that a good character education model lays the foundation of values in the vision of the education unit. In planning, it has included habituation activities that contain religious, nationalist, independent, mutual

cooperation and integrity values. These five characters are the main priorities of PPK launched in the 2013 curriculum.

The implementation of school culture is realised according to what was planned. Religious values grow along with religious activities which are carried out routinely and are guided. Through the habit of prayer in congregation for those who are Muslim, this trains students not only in terms of togetherness, but also to cultivate discipline and timely values. The existence of shared prayer habits at the beginning and at the end of learning and reading short letters in the Holy Qur'an, fosters a sense of confidence in the greatness of the Merciful God. With this habit children are trained to believe that learning becomes easy with the help of Allah. S.W.T. Religious values grow well. This can be seen in the activity of ablution. Patients patiently wait for the queue, help each other fix the mukena used by their friends when they want to pray. In addition, by habituating Friday charity to train students to have a sense of care for fellow brothers in need. This habit fosters mutual tolerance between friends. This is seen in the student breaks. Some students share food supplies with each other and some share cakes bought in the school canteen. During group discussions, the students also seem to cooperate well, share opinions and respect each other. Group discussions help the students learn qualities of leadership, team spirit, cooperative and coordinative skills, mutual interdependence and friendly bonds (Miller & Joseph, 2008; Komisarjevsky, 1982; Hensley, 2002).

The value of religious values develops well, because habituation is built through programmed and planned religious activities. The facts described illustrate that the teacher has made efforts to develop the value of the religious character of students through an effective approach. According to Aunillah (2011:37), the affective or attitude approach is used as one approach in character education, has a concept that explains that learning is seen as a conscious effort of an individual to obtain overall behavioural changes, both changes in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. Thus, character values develop not only in religious aspects, but other moral values also develop. It can be said that habituation in carrying out religious activities has a positive impact on good moral growth. As explained by Lickona (2012:65), religion for most people is a major reference that leads them to form a moral life.

Habits that are done at school, are also those focused on efforts to develop nationalist values. In order to support the growth of nationalist values, the ceremony was carried out every Monday and national holidays, as well as singing national songs at the beginning of learning and folk songs at the end of learning. In addition, national holidays are also commemorated, through various activities that are appropriate for the commemorated holiday. For example, when commemorating Kartini Day, teachers and students are encouraged to wear traditional regional attire. This is done so that the love of the country will grow along with pride in the diversity of Indonesian culture. In addition, with this activity, a sense of participation is expected to grow in maintaining the nation's own culture by mutual respect. On the anniversary of the Indonesian Independence Day, there were competitions which demanded creativity, hard work, and independence, as well as courage. On Heroes' Day, activities were held together with flower

sowing at the tomb of the hero. From the activities carried out, it is believed that these can foster a nationalist spirit. This is in accordance with one of the principles of the concept of character education, namely the establishment of an attitude of love for the motherland. Furthermore, it was stated that at the core this was about the attitude of the willingness to struggle, sacrifice, and readiness to provide assistance (Aunillah, 2011:105).

Independent character values grow along with habituation in activities that require courage, hard work, toughness and creativeness. Through varied activities, both inside and outside the classroom, independence can grow. For example, through literacy activities carried out at the beginning of learning, students are used to doing activities independently. Similarly, the habits of conversation and *pachelaton* are carried out regularly once a week. The soul of hard work, diligence, tenaciousness, courage and creativeness is built through entrepreneurial activities that are conducted every second Saturday. Through practicing entrepreneurship, students are required to dare to sell goods and offer them through promotions first. This kind of activity is expected to be able to prepare an entrepreneurial spirit from an early age. More importantly, through this activity, an independent character will be formed, as explained in the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017) that: the value of independent character is attitude and behaviour not dependent on others and using all energy, mind, time to realise hopes, dreams, and goals. Independent students have a good, tough, fighting, professional, creative, courageous, and lifelong work ethic (Kamaruddin, 2012).

From the description of the independent character values above, to be able to develop them, it is not enough just to do with debriefing activities, but habituation through real experience, which is more meaningful and is believed to be able to foster independent character values. In accordance with Aunillah (2011:110) and Attaran (2015), character education is based not only on the understanding and knowledge, but also through the process of habituation.

Activities such as entrepreneurship, class picking and clean Friday require cooperation, honesty, responsibility, help and mutual respect. Thus, indirectly through these activities, they also strengthen the value of mutual cooperation and integrity. Activities that are designed and implemented contextually, are believed to be more meaningful for students, because they are more memorable and can be applied in daily life. If studied in each activity, some character values are integrated, because in principle each activity demands departure from some attitudes.

Evaluation can be defined as an activity carried out to determine the level of achievement of the objectives set in a program of activities, that have been planned systematically. Aunillah (2011:111) stated that evaluation is carried out not only in order to obtain value, but to know the extent to which students experience changes in behavior compared to before. From this opinion it was revealed that evaluation was needed in order to know the success or failure of the programs planned. In addition, it can also be used to monitor and measure success in developing positive student characteristics. Which activities are effective and less effective can

be assessed through the evaluation of the activities. From the findings it can be said that evaluation has not been carried out optimally. This is explained by the results of the interview that it is known that the teacher does not have a record of the results of the reflection of each activity. The new assessment is limited to the assessment of attitudes that appear to students. Attitude assessment is carried out by teachers and students as peers. Assessment results are included in report cards for aspects of attitude assessment. This fact reflects that evaluation in character education carried out through school culture in elementary school is still not optimal because it is only limited to media for assessing student attitudes.

Evaluation of the implementation and success of each activity should be carried out regularly by using standards or indicators of success of each activity. This needs to be done because the results can be used as feedback, as well as the basis for making improvements in subsequent activities. In addition, through programmed evaluation activities, it also fulfills one of the principles of the Ministry of Education and Culture's PPK, namely it is measurable. This means that the measurement principle needs to be applied so that the success or effectiveness of the program can be known and acted upon. At the evaluation stage, assessment is carried out for continuous improvement, that is intentionally designed and implemented to detect character actualisation in students as an indicator that the characterisation and empowerment process of the character works well.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and findings, it can be concluded in general that the implementation of the school culture aimed at supporting character strengthening programs in elementary school, has been well planned and implemented. Specifically it is stated that: character development of students through school culture has been planned systematically, both from the aspect of activities and infrastructure at the beginning of each semester; implemented optimally, because it is carried out in accordance with planning through activities that are fun, varied and contextual, involving collaboration with outside institutions; evaluation of the program's implementation has been carried out, but it has not been optimal, because it has not been conducted regularly and is based on standardised indicators of success. Thus, it is recommended that planning at the beginning of each semester be carried out systematically in writing and in detail, where the carrying out of activities is recorded or recorded in an orderly manner, and the monitoring mechanism is clear. Efforts to develop character should be carried out in the implementation stage, involving parents and the local community, so that there is a departure between school, parents, and the community. Periodic evaluation activities with appropriate instruments need to be carried out to obtain feedback and as a reference for the improvement of future activities.

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