THE ANALYSIS OF THE STATE OF READINESS TOWARD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARACTER-BASED CURRICULUM

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Abstract. *The character education is highly important to implement in the present time. The quality of a nation also determined by its quality of characters. The rapid pace of technology, the high demand of economic and other lifestyle needs, stated as several factors responsible for current descending state of human character, especially in this post-pandemic period. This study aimed to perceive the state of readiness toward implementing character-based curriculum in one of middle school in Bandung. The analysis is focused on various dimensions, these are: physical space, behavior, activities, objects and events. This study utilized a qualitative approach with a case study model, carried out by observing and conducting a descriptive analysis of all emerged real-life events without intervene nor induced treatment to the participants. The employed data collection techniques were direct class observation at one grade level and interviews with teacher and student. The observation proposes that a coherent character-based curriculum implementation brings together five dimensions in an actionable way. All of these supporting dimensions of implementation: the availability of physical space, capability of the people involved, activity or programs, involved objects, and various real-life events need to be well prepared especially in the planning stage. The state of readiness of these various dimensions can affect the implementation of the character-based curriculum in education units. Therefore, a proper multi-dimensional analysis is required to determine the extent to which the implementation is coherent and can result in effective change, also as a resource for reflection on how to move forward with or assess a curriculum implementation strategy.*

Keywords: *Character education; curriculum; implementation; qualitative; case study*

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important things in human life is the character possessed, uniquely, by individuals. This character shapes personality and influence person's way of think and act. One of keys to develop good character is through adequate education. Education that focuses on character building is an effort that must be carried out continuously. Good character must continue to be taught and reinforced as part of formal education and eventually becomes a habit and remain as primary character in an individual. Several individual characters that can be nurtured, including responsibility, respect, initiative, integrity, honesty, fairness, courage, perseverance, empathy, and optimism (Dimerman, 2009). This consistent with the goals of national education as stated in article 3 in the Act of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 on National Education System: The National Education functions to develop the capability, character, and civilization of the nation for enhancing its intellectual capacity, and is aimed at developing learners' potentials so that they become persons imbued with human values who are faithful and pious to one and only God; who possess morals and noble character; who are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent; and as citizens, are democratic and responsible. Practical application to develop good characters could be implemented through several ways, including learning process, modeling, reinforcement, and habituation (Taulabi and Mustofa, 2019).

Our nation's character is declining at an alarming rate. It is marked by the increase of law violation, crime and other deterioration (Taulabi and Mustofa, 2019). In school, character decline reflected in downward trends of children's manner or behavior, such act including disrespect, dishonest, lazy, ignorant, etc. The downward trends of morality in our nation's youth has been correlated and linked as one of the result of the implementation of educational activities during the global pandemic outbreak (Massie and Nababan, 2021). During such time, students experienced a significant decrease intensity in interacting and communicating, coupled with insufficient of digital knowledge and skills, both students and educators, in implementing and facilitating long distance learning.

Characters is shape through continue exemplary behavior (leading by example) and habituation. However, it also influenced by various factors. Family background is one of fundamental factors that play a role key in character shaping in children, as they will dominantly spend most of their time to grow within the home environment. Economics factor of the family also determined the formation of character habituation in the home environment and, in general, related to the parent's level of education. A good relationship between parent and children can create and nurture a healthy home environment. As character training begins at home, parental exemplary behavior is very important in the shaping of children's character.

Character education is highly correlated with level of education and habituation in both home and school environment. School environment is a place to shape character through habituation and exemplary. The nurture of good character in students is included in the curriculum policy (Harianti, 2010). Students at the secondary school age level are one of the most appropriate levels to view the character-based education. This level underlies education to go to the next level, which according to Piaget at this middle age level a student has entered adolescence (Mauliya, 2019). At this age, they begins to imaging the ideal situation according to their wishes and compares it with the reality they facing. They had possessed the ability of critical and logical thinking on abstract thing and test hypotheses systematically (Mauliya, 2019). Therefore, a research is needed, regarding character-building implemented in informal education in one of the middle schools in the city of Bandung.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Curriculum Implementation

The curriculum implementation is the act of applied or working out of something that has an impact or causes change (Wahyudin, 2014). In accordance with Miller and Seller who argued that curriculum implementation is the application of a curriculum concept that is applied to learning practices so that a change is produced in a certain group that is expected to change (Wahyudin, 2014). Implementation or application of the curriculum is a form of actualize the planned and designed curriculum that have been made. Teaching and learning activities, as well as components related to these activities such as students, teachers, learning documents, and supporting infrastructure, are part of the curriculum implementation. Several factors that have an impact on curriculum implementation including, education materials, teachers, learning environment, infrastructure, ideology, culture, supervision and assessment. Hamalik (2009) stated that various curriculum implementation programs were prepared and designed by experts to measure the improvement of curriculum changes and identify the inhibiting and supporting factors in curriculum implementation in education units. The success of implementing the curriculum starts with solid planning, with a focus on three elements, namely the involved individuals, the implemented programs, and the series of processes accompanied (Ornstein, 2018). Educators must be able to change

habits as well as students' perspectives to implement curriculum changes (Ornstein, 2018). This curriculum change must be supported by all involved parties, started from the planning and designing process, implementation, and through the evaluation process. In Indonesia, the curriculum changes and modification occur quite periodically along with shifting of policy makers in government institutions. Curriculum changes that lead to curriculum improvements should be consistent with the ongoing curriculum development and adapted to current and future requirement. Curriculum development, especially character-based curriculum, aims to produce a future generation that has a better competence, innovative, productive, creative, and possess with good character (Af'idah and Jaedun, 2020).

2.2 Factors Influencing Curriculum Implementation

Hamalik (2009) suggests, several factors that influence the implementation of the curriculum, including:

1. Characteristics of the curriculum which contains the scope of the new curriculum and its elaboration in education units.
2. The strategy of implementation, that is all forms of strategy formulated to support the implementation of the curriculum in the education unit.
3. Curriculum practitioner, encompass skills, knowledge, values, teachers' stance towards the curriculum and its application.

2.3 Students Character

Character is a psychological part of an individual that can influenced and affected the individual's abilities and tendencies. Character of an individual can be shaped from the beginning of their personal growth period. Heriansyah (2018) states that, the educators could teaching students to have good characters through several efforts, including leading by example, assignments, emphasize action, and becoming role models or exemplary for their students. The character education is very important and necessary to be implemented, as outcome of character education has always been encouraging, solidly, and continually preparing the leaders of tomorrow (Agboola and Tsai, 2012). In another study, it was stated that, in the process of teaching learning student's moral values are considered as a long life process and schools play a vital role to teaching moral and ethical values (Chowdhury et al., 2019). Character education is a growing discipline with the deliberate attempt to optimize students' ethical behavior (Berkowitz and Hoppe, 2009). Educational character has the same mission with behavior education or moral education (Dalmeri, 2014).

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The main focus in this research is the implementation of the curriculum. Qualitative approach were utilized in this study, as this approach focus on the natural and noninterference real-life events emerged (Ali, 2014) and considered as most appropriate for exploring and understanding those events during the research. The types of research strategies used in the research is case studies. Case studies are used to explore and gain in-depth knowledge of a program, event, activity, process, or involved individuals (Raharjo, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The specific methods employed in conducting these strategies including interview with the teachers and direct observation at one grade level.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the process, the implementation of a character-based curriculum in this school involves several stages, started from the planning and preparation, implementation, and through the evaluation process.

4.1 Planning and Preparation Stage

This stage carried out prior the start of each semester. The process at this stage including: (1) Preparation of lesson plans; (2) Formulate supporting programs or activities to develop character building in students; (3) Setting up facilities and infrastructure to support learning activity.

All teachers actively involved in preparing the lesson plans that will be implemented in the next semester. The prepared lesson plans, contains subject matter, stages of learning activities, and expected targets linked to specific character-based curriculum implemented in the school environment. Every lesson plans is formulated through syllabus analysis of the 2013 National Curriculum linked to verses of the Qur'an as a reinforcement of character building in students.

The next process is formulate programs or activities to support character building in students. Several of this school activities serve as training and habituation program to develop good character including continuous implementation of daily religious practice, class meeting, field trip, outdoor class, and market day.

The third process related with setting up classroom environment to support learning activity. This process include: the availability of clean and tidy classrooms, setting up an initial scheme on interior display design and class function layout, and periodically arrange, adjust and rotate students seating position. Formulation, confirmation, and execution of the final scheme will involve students in the process.

4.2 Implementation Stage

This stage, in general, is the implementation process of the blue print that has been formulated and prepared in the previous stage. In this stage, the teacher always encourage students to be actively involved in every activity. The process spans from the beginning of semester through end. At the beginning of the semester, the activities were dominated with class arrangement and preparation, starting from preparation of supporting infrastructure for learning activity, arrange a clean and tidy environment in the classroom, planning and implementing class interior display design and function layout refer to a selected theme or particular event, made consensus on the arrangement and rotation of the students seating position on a regular basis, organizational structuring and made consensus on general rules to be apply in the classroom, as well as the socialization of targets of achievement on student's attitude or character for the following semester.

One of unique and distinct program implemented in this school is the continuous habituation of daily religious practice. This program is integrated with daily learning activities at school as well as daily life including in the home environment and will be evaluated periodically. Learning activities at this school always begin with daily recite of morning supplication, perform Duha prayer and quoting one of the verses of the Qur'an as a reference in developing the character of students. The study of Qur'an curricula included in the daily study hours, in form of recitation improvement and increase and reinforce memorization. The study hours also arranged in order to allowing students to perform the Zuhur prayers in congregation and other *sunnah* practices, such as individual recitations and *sunnah* prayer. Daily learning activity ended with the Asr prayer in congregation and reciting the daily closing prayer. Other *sunnah* practices encouraged in this program include fasting on Mondays and/or

Thursdays and Tahajjud prayers. The program also encouraged to be perform daily, both by teachers and students.

Other formulated program to develop good character is class meeting. Class meeting is a twice a week program integrated in study hours, which are used to discuss student personality development or plan activities to be carried out in other programs such as quarterly projects, field trips, outdoor classes, and market days.

4.3 Evaluation

The next stage in implementing the curriculum is the evaluation stage. The evaluation process in the observed schools, not only evaluate students' academic achievements, but also their attitude and behavior as primary issue of evaluation. Academic achievements evaluation is carried out through various assessment processes such as paper pencil tests, practice and projects. This includes formative and summative assessment.

While the attitudes assessment is obtained through the evaluation in quarterly and at end of semester, toward attitude recapitulated in the daily religious practice book. This assessment is closely related to the development and shaping of the character of students. Therefore, the assessment of attitudes in this school is one of the main requirements for students to be able to obtain record of completeness from each grade level. This performed by the school as one of efforts and policies to measure the achievement of completeness of the applied character education. This condition is in accordance with Singh (2019) who stated "Character education is a growing discipline in recent times with the intent of optimizing student's ethical behavior and education policy should take the lead to actualize moral education." The character education implemented in this school takes reference from the hallmark curriculum of the foundation that supervise the school, in this case based on the Qur'an and Hadith as a main reference and framework of its curriculum development.

The attitude assessment process in school environment is carried out in several stages. The process start with daily attitude and behavior assessment through teacher-student interviews related attitude achievements, habituation of religious practice, and evaluation for improvement refer to recapitulation on the daily religious practice book.

The next stage of this attitude assessment is involving parents to assess their children's attitude and behavior at home environment. In addition, every students have to presenting their one school year of attitude achievements and habituations, refers to the attitude standard assigned by the school. They have to evaluate their self-achievement along with the obstacles they have to deal with to comply these standards achievement.

4.4 The Influence of the Supporting Dimensions

The observation proposes that a coherent character-based curriculum implementation brings together five dimensions in an actionable way. These are: physical space, behavior, activities, objects, and events. The way the five dimensions are weaved in together and communicated through an actionable lens can determine the extent to which the implementation is coherent and can result in effective change.

In the physical space dimension, a proper class arrangement could enhanced positive classroom environment. Rather than the traditional grid layout, the group pods seating arrangements produced positive effect on social interaction and make students more collaborative and actively involved in learning and discussion. This layout also make easier for the teacher to monitor and assist students during individual and group activities (Simmons et al., 2015). However, the close proximity could also encourage social interactions that are not conducive to learning.

Pictures 1. Learning activity in classroom environment with group pods seatingarrangements.

All lesson plans and programs that are prepared are always linked to the good character that is expected to develop in students. Some of the program also encouraged to be perform daily, both by teachers and students. This in lined with was stated by Taulabi and Mustofa (2019) that the application of character education in schools or educational units can be carried out through four ways, direct learning, modeling, reinforcement, and habituation. Various real-life events that emerged from the implementation of programs were used for evaluation purposes. The evaluation process not only involved teachers, but also students and parent.

Teachers is one of elements with significant role as they involved in every stage in implementation of curriculum. Teachers must have the necessary pedagogical and content knowledge and skills to facilitate teaching and learning, also as a role model for the students. Along with students, both are objects that play a direct role in implementing the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Planning character-based curriculum implementation requires careful thinking about the five dimensions presented above, and their translation into a set of concrete actions to shape a coherent implementation strategy. Therefore, a proper multidimensional analysis is required as a resource for reflection on how to move forward with or assess a curriculum implementation strategy.

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