Character Education Strategies Based On Religious Educative Communication In Islamic Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes character education strategies based on Religious Educative Communication (REC) in Islamic Elementary Schools, which is one of the solutions to resolve moral decadence in Indonesia. The implementation of REC-based character education in Islamic Elementary Schools is very urgent since the age of Islamic Elementary Schools is a foundation of formal education, which will determine the direction, and the sustainability of Indonesia. Besides that, Islamic Elementary Schools plays an important role as a way to strengthen national character and values. REC-based character education in Islamic Elementary Schools needs to be optimalised in terms of its strategies, methods, media and teaching materials containing educational values and policies in order to form the characters of the students. The REC-based character education is implemented through communication culture that educates all stakeholders based on religious values, namely the management board of the foundation, the principal, the teachers, the educational staff, the guardians, the students and the alumni.

Keywords

Strategy, Character Education, Communication, Educative, Religious, Islamic Elementary School.

Introduction

Nowadays, character education is an urgent program to be implemented in formal educational institutions at all levels in Indonesia. The successfulness of the character education program of *Kurtilas* (Curriculum 2013) is certainly influenced by the implementation of the learning process in the schools. During the implementation, indeed, proper strategies are needed so that students are not only knowledgeable in the theories of good characters but are also able to apply them in their daily life.

The reality is that formal education is considered not yet fully successful in forming Indonesian people with good characters. This thesis is based on various behaviors showed by students and university graduates who are not in accordance with the noble goals of education. For example corruption, which was apparently done by state officials who were none other than educated people. Also based on the behavior of some Indonesian teenagers who did not reflect themselves as educated youth. For example, engaging in brawls between students, drug abuse or even immoral acts. Ironically, this negative behavior also occurs among elementary school students.

The research findings of Ariandra Satria (Satria, 2016) presented some forms of students' delinquency found in elementary schools, namely: 1) delinquencies in the category of vandalism (damaging materials) such as damaging school's inventory, scratching school walls, and stealing other's belongings. 2) delinquencies in the category of bullying with physical victims such as fighting, rude commands to physically weaker students and beating them. 3) delinquencies in the category of breaking school's descipline such as arriving late to school, leaving classes

and not coming back (skipping), unneat uniform, harsh words to other students, and a case of yelling at teachers.

So far, the implementation of education in both elementary and secondary schools prioritizes cognitive aspects rather than the affective and psychomotor ones. This causes inequality in the world of education. Education only forms intelligent students but their skills, independence and morals are questionable. Ideally, education does not only equip students with various knowledge and thinking skills, but also moral awareness which is very important for life. This moral cultivation should begin very early, namely in the level of elementary school.

Students of Islamic elementary schools (hereinafter referred to as MI standing for *Madrassah Ibtidaiyyah*) should be aware that they will always face problems in their lives, and in the near future, they will face them in a global scale. Therefore, learning must be designed to develop knowledge, understanding and the ability to analyze the dynamic social conditions. With such an approach it is hoped that students will gain a broader understanding and are able to train critical thinking skills based on the themes or sub-themes presented by the teacher through integrative thematic learning in MI. This learning model could improve the characters of MI students.

Human with characters are individuals who know goodness, want, love, and do goodness. Character education contains three main elements, namely knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good (Tom Lickona et al., 2007). Character education does not only teach children what is right and what is wrong, but more than that, character education instills habits (habituation) about the good so that they understand, are able to feel, and are willing to do good.

Tomas Lickona (Thomas Lickona, 2009) states "children with positive characters are indicated by the presence of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior which are constantly manifested, both explicitly and implicitly". Children with positive characters will not grow by themselves. They need a supportive environment that is intentionally created, thus enabling their potentials to grow optimally with characters. The diverse experiences children go through since their early development have a great influence on their lives later on. These experiences play an important role in realizing the formation of a sound personality, which cannot be achieved except by developing children's potentials well from the early stage.

One of the efforts to realize the above-mentioned condition, students must be equipped with special education which puts character building as the main mission. Such an education could give the students direction after achieving a variety of knowledge on how to practice it in the midst of society while still holding the universal values of truth and goodness. Efforts that can be made to foster the students' characters include maximizing the function of subjects loaded with character education material.

In recent years, character education containing the values of religious and educative communication (REC) is increasingly recognized as an urgent need given the fact that cognitive intelligence alone does not guarantee one's success in life. In Ningsih's view education is a process related to efforts to develop a person through three aspects of his life, namely life outlook, life attitude and life skills (Ningsih et al., 2015). Education is a process of "enculturation" meaning a process to ordain someone to be able to live in a certain culture. Furthermore Ningsih revealed that education is a process that takes place in a certain culture. Many cultural values and orientations that can inhibit and encourage education. There are many cultural values can be used consciously in the education process. Ki Hadjar Dewantara (Dewantara & Karya, 1977) also has reminded, that in responding to this culture, an alert attitude is needed in choosing which is good to add to the noblity of life and which will harm others. So that religious and educative communication (REC) from teachers and all school staff with the students could encourage their character growth and development

DISCUSSION

Definition of Character Education
The word 'character' etymologically comes from the Greek word "charassein", which means an item or tool for scraping, which is later understood to be a stamp or labeling. Terminologically, character means "a reliable inner disposition to respond to situations in a morally good way." Furthermore Lickona added, "Character so conceived has three interrelated parts: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior". Based on the three components, it can be stated that good character is supported by the knowledge of the good, the desire to do good, and the action of good. So that the completeness of the moral components of a person will shape the characters that are already in him/her to be

tough or superior. Included in moral knowing are (1) moral awareness, (2) knowing moral values, (3) perspective taking, (4) moral reasoning, (5) decision making, and (6) self-knowledge. Whereas moral feeling is strengthening the emotional aspects of students to become human with characters. This reinforcement relates to the forms of attitudes that must be owned by the students, namely: (1) conscience, (2) self-esteem, (3) empathy to the suffering of others, (4) loving the good, (5) self control, and (6) humility. Whereas Moral Action is moral manifestation which is the outcome of the other two components. To understand what drives a person in a good act (act morally), three other aspects of character must be seen, namely: (1) competence, (2) will, and (3) habit.

According to Ryan and Bohlin (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999), character consists of intelligence possessed by someone and his/her habits of behavior, according to them "character consists of a person's intellectual and moral habits. It includes both good habits, or virtues, and bad habits, or vices; taken together, all these habits form our personalities. "The moral identity of a person is the best predictor of his/her commitment to moral action" (Köse, 2015). People with "character" mean people who have good personality, behavior, trait, conduct, or nature. Based on this definition, it is suggested that "character" is identical with personality or moral. One's personality is his characteristic or trait that comes from the overtime formations his environment has done to him, such as how his family treated him during his childhood, and also an innate nature from birth (Koesoema, 2007). On the other hand, education is building character, which implicitly means building a nature or pattern of behavior based on or relating to positive or good moral dimensions, not negative or evil ones. Character is the values of human behavior in relation to God, self, fellow human beings, the environment and the nation which are manifested in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words and actions based on religious norms, law, etiquette, culture and customs (Muslich, 2011).

Samani and Hariyanto (Samani & Hariyanto, 2011) defines character education as a process of giving guidance to students to become true human beings who have characters in their heart, mind and body, as well as in their feeling and determination. While Doni Koesoema (Koesoema, 2007) defined character education as a dynamic condition of the individual's anthropological structure, which does not want to merely stop over the determination of its nature, but also an effort to live more integrally in overcoming the natural determination in him/herself for the process of contiuous self-improvement. Meanwhile, character education according to Zusyani (Zusnani, 2012) is the process of giving guidance to students to become true human beings who have character in their heart, mind, body, as well as in their feeling and determination. Students are expected to have good characters including honesty, responsibility, smart, clean and healthy, caring, and creative. According to Samani and Hariyanto (Samani & Hariyanto, 2011), character education is a conscious and earnest effort of a teacher to teach values to his/her students.

According to Prasetyo (Prasetyo, 2011), character education is a system of cultivating character values to the people in the school which includes components of knowledge, awareness or willingness, and actions to carry out those values, both towards God Almighty, theirselves, the fellows, the environment, and the nation making them perfect human beings/*Insan Kamil*. Character education has become an educational movement that supports the social development, emotional development, and ethical development of the students. It is a proactive effort made by both schools and governments to help students develop the core of ethical values such as caring, honesty, diligence, fairness, tenacity and fortitude, responsibility, respect to self and others.

According to the grand design of character education, character education is a process of cultivating and empowering noble values into the environments of education unit (school), family, and community (Zubaedi, 2011). Character education is interpreted as education that develops character values within the students so that they have values and character as their identity, apply these values in their daily lives, as members of the society and citizens who are religious, nationalist, productive, and creative.

Imposing Character Education to Students of Islamic Elementary School

Character education for madrasah ibtidaiyah or elementary school students requires the involvement of many parties including the school, the family, and the community. At school, teachers teach their students a variety of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values especially related to preparing children with intellectual and social intelligence. At the residence, the family teaches them emotional balance and the development of affection, so the family becomes a school of love. Meanwhile, the community teaches them about harmony, cooperation, and work ethic to create a just and prosperous life order.

According to Mukti Amini (Amini, 2008), character education strategies that can be carried out by the teachers are, namely: a) The teachers are obliged to create a safe and warm atmosphere; b) The teachers act as a positive role model for the children, because the children learn mostly from what they see not from what they hear; c) The teachers invite the children to discipline themselves so that they behave in accordance with the values and norms that are upheld in themselves and the society.

Besides the three things above, some important things that the teachers can do as a strategy in shaping the children's character are: a) The teachers can involve the active participation of children in trying, practicing, controlling, and utilizing concrete and abstract things; b) The teachers can build supportive and caring relationships for children in the school and outside; c) The teachers try to create opportunities for the children to be active and full of meaning including in life at school and outside; d) The teachers teach social and emotional skills essentially; e) The teachers strives to engage students in moral discourse. Moral

issues are the essence of children's education to be pro-social.

The ideal character education program is a joint effort of administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents. Administrators, teachers and counselors share two tasks, one of which is to encourage the involvement of parents and the others as model for students. Role modeling is as the heart and soul of a program. First, good character must be taught from the perspective of "do as I do" not "do as I say". In addition to serving as a model, each administrator, teacher, and counselor has his/her own roles. The role of the administrator is to set an example especially in the school community and environment. The teacher focuses their efforts on how classmates relate to each other. School counselors function as consultants for other school personnel because they focus on helping children develop characters that will improve their understanding of themselves and their relationships with others.

To successfully carry out character education, a good school is needed. The criteria of a good school according to Suyata (Suyata, 2010) are, 1) good schools are generally good in all aspects, there are no good schools composed of good and bad things; 2) good schools build a good chain of traits and get support from the regional organizational system. A good elementary school will supply students for a good middle school, and a good middle school will provide students for a good high school; 3) good schools are well aware of their school culture. Bad schools never reflect on their shortcomings; 4) good schools always care about all the existing affairs, are organized, orderly involving all parties in all management processes; 5) good schools have positive humanitarian relations, teachers are positive towards students and do not behave rudely towards them; 6) good schools have a positive relationship with the child's home and parents. Parents know what goes on with their children at school, because parents have enough information from the school.

Goodlad (Goodlad, 1994) states that in building a quality school two things are needed, namely: 1) the connectedness of many parties, especially among the principal, teachers, students, and parents in their daily lives. 2) a really good school is not just a school with good exam results. A good school always cares and is serious about the relationship between the mission and the vision, seriously takes care of the curricular and teaching, cares about the teaching and educational mission. Character education is largely determined by the upholding of the principals of the character and the methods being used for that (Musfiroh, 2008). This is important, according to Musfiroh, because without character identification, character education will only be an adventure without a map, without a purpose. Besides, proper methods are as well needed to avoid the character education being only transferred as knowledge to students' cognitive areas. To form human character, the cognitive aspects must be strengthened by emotional aspects.

Character education will be effective if it is supported by

environmental conditions. Lickona (Thomas Lickona, 2009) explains that students are most likely to be people of character when they grow up in a good charactered society, where there are efforts from families, schools, churches, temples, mosques, media, government, and the whole community as good models and teach the desired character traits. That is a big challenge, if observed over the past three decades, there has been a decline in the quality of everyday moral life, in simple matters such as politeness, people's behavior in public places, and courtesy on the road. This condition requires serious efforts from the whole community to restore good moral condition. Furthermore, the time for children to learn from the community is far more than the time children learn at school. Community environment that supports character will greatly support the process of character education for students.

Instilling value to the school's community means that character education will only be effective once students, teachers, principals, and administrative staff are involved in the practice of character education. The role of teachers in schools in the process of forming the character values and morality of students can be done through the activities of learning, educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, and evaluating students. Teachers play a very strategic role especially in shaping character and developing students' potential.

In addition to the human capitals (stakeholders) as mentioned above, the establishment of character education in schools should also be supported by sound organization, administration, and learning processes namely curriculum content, learning and assessment processes, subject management, school management, implementation of activities or curricular activities, utilization of infrastructure, funding and work performance of all school's staff and the neighboring area. According to Zuchdi and Rachmatika (Zuchdi & Rachmatika, 2008) character education in schools is a vital need so that future generations can be equipped with basic abilities that are not only able to make "long life education" as one of the important characters to live in an era of global reform but also able to function with positive role as individual, family member, citizen, and the world's inhabitant. For this reason, instrumental efforts must be made to improve the effectiveness of the learning process along with the development of a positive culture. Character education as cited by Samani and Hariyanto (Samani & Hariyanto, 2011) is the process of giving guidance to students to become fully human beings who have characters in the dimensions of heart, thought, body, feeling, and action.

Definition of Religious and Educative Communication (REC)

According to Suharsaputra (Suharsaputra, 2013), "educative communication is communication involving thoughts, feelings and behaviors that can impact education, maturity in intellectual, moral and social aspects, educative communication includes interactions in the school environment and classroom environment, also in the

community when teachers meet them in a certain religious events".

Martinis Yamin (Yamin, 2007), states "Religious Educative Interaction is a communication activity carried out reciprocally between students and teachers, students and lecturers, in understanding, discussing, questioning, demonstrating, practicing materials in the classroom based on religious values ". Meanwhile, according to B. Suryosubroto (Darajat, 2009), "religious educative interaction is a reciprocal relationship between teachers (educators) and students in a teaching system based on religion", so the intended interaction is communication, meanwhile communication is a word that means to participate, notify or become a common property. The communication between students and teachers is the presentation of messages (material) conveyed by the teachers to the students therein occurs and a reciprocal (communicative) relationship being carried out.

Djamarah and Zain (Djamarah & Zain, 2000), stated "religious educative interaction is an interaction of teaching and learning based on religious teachings", i.e. a process of interaction that collects a number of values (norms) which are substance, as a medium between teachers and students in order to achieve the goals. Religious educative communication (REC) must describe two-way active relations with a number of knowledge as a medium, so that the interaction is a meaningful and creative relationship, the teacher must act as a facilitator and guide who tries to make his/her students active and creative optimally. While the educational interaction process is a process that contains a number of norms that teachers must transfer to their students. Educative interaction is a bridge that enlivens harmony between knowledge and action, which leads to behavior in accordance with the knowledge received by the students. Educative interactions is that teachers not only teach but also understand the psychological atmosphere of the students as well as the classroom conditions. Educative interaction is also a normative interaction that is an activity carried out consciously and purposefully. The goal is for students to become mature adults of their behavior.

In line with the statement above, it can be concluded that religious educative communication (REC) is a reciprocal relationship between teachers and students in educational process, i.e. the process of teaching and learning based on religious values. Teaching and learning process is an educational activity. The process in which educational value that colors the interaction because the teaching and learning activity is done and directed to achieve certain goals that have been formulated before the teaching begins. In religious educative communication, teachers do not only teach, in the sense of transferring knowledge and skills but also educate in the sense of guiding them with values, norms and ethics so to form good attitudes, personalities and behavior to reach the level of maturity in accordance with religious teachings.

Character Education Strategy Based on Religious Educative Communication in Islamic Elementary School

The success of character education in schools, not only depends on the sound planning and the smooth implementation of the educational programs, but also on how the principal, teachers, and employees carry out teaching and learning activities in the school, both in and outside the classroom. The role of the teacher is very important in character education in the school, the teacher should always give positive comments to every opinion expressed by students, in such a way students become excited to go to school. According to the Ministry of National Education (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010), to form good character in schools, character education is integrated into all subject matter since that integration process is carried out in order to develop interventions. What needs to be done further is to ensure that the delivery of learning material has an instructional impact on the formation of character formation. Value integration can also be done for one or more subjects in each learning material. For instance, attitude ia a value that does not stand alone, but it stands in a series of element. Internally, each value contains elements of thoughts, feelings and moral behavior that are psychologically interconnected.

Character is formed from consistent internalization of values, meaning that there is harmony between the elements of the value. For example, the character of honesty, it is formed in a unified whole between the meaning of honesty, the will of honesty, and the action of honestly. Because each value is in the spectrum or group of values, psychologically and socio-culturally a value must be coherent with other values in the group to form a complete character, as written in the policy of the Ministry of National Education (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010). The synergy between character education and learning material must be designed, developed and implemented in a complementary way. In the development of character education, learning material is perceived as the integration of messages and tools, i.e. as a vehicle for individual empowerment. For example, physics teachers must be aware that the discussion of physics material is directed at developing students' ability to understand natural phenomena from the viewpoint of physical theory, exploring various sources of information and analyzing them to complete that understanding, communicating that understanding to others, and understanding that such phenomena can not be separated from the "Role" of the Creator, God the Almighty.

The development of character education as such, can be done through various models and learning methods opted by the teacher by considering the contexts. For example, to develop communication skills, the teacher could choose discussion or presentation methods. To develop cooperative skills, discipline, and group work, the teacher could apply them in practicum activities in laboratories, in the field, or in the internship places. What is important is that those activities should be deliberately designed, then the results are assessed as a form of character education. There are many ways of integrating characters into learning material, including: exploring the values in the learning materials, registering certain characters into an integrated part of the learning materials, using examples and reflecting the

characters in the examples with the events happen in the students' lives, transforming negative things into positive things, expressing values through discussion and debates, using stories to explain life values, using the biographies of important figures, using songs and music, presenting drama about events containing good characters, using various activities such as services and field practices through students clubs or other organization to train human values (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010).

Furthermore, Ningsih (Ningsih et al., 2015)offers 7 (seven) character education strategies to be adopted in learning activities as follow: 1) The education objectives and targets must be clear and concrete; 2) The character education should be done not only by the school, but rather by the collaborative works between the school and the parents since it is more effective and efficient; 3) The teachers' awareness of their important role as well as their responsibility in implementing and achieving the goals of character education, especially the changes in the selves of the students; 4) The teachers' awareness of the need for a "hidden curriculum" as a very important instrument in developing the characters of the students; 5) In carrying out teaching sessions, teachers must emphasize the training on critical and creative thinking ability, cooperation ability, and decision-making ability of the students; 6) School culture must be utilized in developing the character of students; and 7) Essentially one phase of character education is the process of habituation in daily life, especially in schools that can be monitored and controlled by the principal and the teachers.

Strategies that could be applied in teaching sessions as an effort to improve the quality of character education is to integrate character values into subjects, there are many ways to do this. According to Muslich (Muslich, 2011) character education can be integrated in the learning activities of any subject. The materials related to norms and values need to be developed, made explicit, and related to daily life. Therefore, the learning of character values is not only at the cognitive level, but also at the level of internalization and real experiences in the daily lives of students in the community.

In character education, among other strategies that can be used is that students are invited to be involved in the learning process, in that sense they are trained to take responsibilities and to make decisions for themselves. Students are involved in planning and managing the learning process in the classroom. With such participation and involvement, the students learn to lead, take responsibility, learn to appreciate different opinion, learn to respect each other, and learn to control themselves.

Through such involvement, students feel proud and will have a mature identity. The aforementioned views of Zamroni and Muslich about character education strategies in the classroom, are actually not much different and even have similarities with the views put forward by Kohlberg, Lickona, and Ki Hadjar Dewantara who stated that in the character teaching process, in order to effectively succeed in

the process, in addition to paying attention to theories in a cognitive way, implementation in everyday life with full responsibility is also required. Moral values and characters that can be implemented in everyday life can help in the success of student learning. The application of character education is done through the integration of predetermined values into the learning process through the integrated character education model in learning. Integrated character education in learning is carried out by the teacher by integrating predetermined target values into the learning process. Therefore, learning objectives must contain both the competence of the field of study and the actualization of the values developed. What is meant by the competence of the field of study here is the competency to be achieved (Core Competencies and Basic Competencies)

This model of character education implementation does not increase the students' learning time and study load. Conversely, through this model, the quality of learning outcomes increases, since the actualization of the target values actually increases the achievements of the study. For example, if the values being integrated are honesty, responsibility, independence, cooperation, and religious observance, the internalization and actualization of these values within the students will actually better their learning outcomes, including those of affective and cognitive mastery as well as skills in the fields of the studies.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The success of character education in schools, does not only depend on the sound planning and the smooth implementation of the educational programs, it also depends on the implementation of learning activites done by the principal, teachers, and employees inside and outside the school. The role of the teacher is very important in character education in the school, the teacher should always give positive comments to every opinion expressed by the students, in such a way to make students excited to go to school. Good character building in schools is integrated into all subject matter since that integration process is carried out in order to develop interventions.

REC-based character education strategy is a reciprocal relationship between educators and students in education process i.e. the teaching and learning process that is based on religious values. Teaching and learning process is an educational activity in which educational values color the interaction of educational value as the teaching and learning activities are done and directed to achieve certain goals that have been previously formulated. In REC, the teachers do not only teaches, in the meaning of providing additional knowledge and skills, but also educates, meaning to guide the student in learning the values, norms and ethics so to embody in their attitudes, personalities and good behavior in accordance with religious teachings.

Acknowledgement

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