

***The Effectiveness of Character Education in Special Education Curricula
for Students With Mental Retardation at Special School in West Java***

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Abstract

The addition of character education in the 2013 special school curriculum or commonly called the K-13 curriculum, has a significant influence on learning services in special schools. Implementation of character education becomes mandatory for all students including, students with mental retardation. Some teachers have tried to implement character education with a variety of learning strategies that integrate character education with special school curriculums of 2013, but currently have not found a model or learning strategy that is considered suitable for character education of students with mental retardation. This qualitative research analyzes the cases of students with mental retardation who study in special schools in West Java Indonesia. The discussion focused on developing character education learning strategy for students with mental retardation in developing the value of independence, discipline, and responsibility. We then suggest recommendations for improvements in implementing character education at special school in Indonesia.

Keywords: character education, mental retardation, character values, learning strategies

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Introduction

Character education stands a strategic position, given that each learning step and activity the teachers carry out basically build the students' character. The school has a strategic position to build students' and nation's character since it is an educational institution with structure, system, and educational set that supports character education, which is integrated into the whole education activity, school culture, and teamwork with the school community. One of the educational sets in school is the curriculum. In Indonesia, special education employs special education curriculum 2013, or usually known as K13. Special Education Curriculum 2013 is officially stipulated in 2014, yet it is fully implemented in 2015 after the special education teacher receives training. The training emphasizes more on the improvement of teacher's skills in developing instructional sets, learning strategies, evaluation, and learning outcome reports. In 2017, the President of the Republic of Indonesia issued President Regulation no. 87 of 2017 on the strengthening of character education. It obliges to add character education to all education curriculum in Indonesia, including special education curriculum. The obligation to add character education to the lessons in special education applies to all students, including mentally retarded student. This addition requires special education teacher's additional competence. It particularly requires adjustment on the procedure of the development of instructional set that is integrated with character values.

K13 has four core competencies (KI) namely, spiritual (KI-1), social (KI-2), knowledge (KI-3), and skill (KI-4) competence. Each competency is developed in basic competence that can be adjusted to each student with a number of indicators formulated by the teacher. The indicators formulated by the teacher should be able to lead to student's character education. The implementation of character education for children with mental retardation in special school becomes unique and more difficult, given that the teachers consider the student's intellectual as an inhibiting factor. The teachers face difficulties due to their lack of skill in developing a learning program that is integrated with character education. The implementation result of character education in special school in general has not been optimum. Many obstacles arise when adding character education to special education curriculum for mentally retarded student, especially regarding the program development and the making of instructional set.

Adding character education to K13 aims to prepare students to face various issues in their daily activities. Character education for children with mental retardation needs to be developed to prepare them facing various social situation. It is also important to teach children with mental retardation pivotal characters needed to build a good character. Character education is a planned and intentional attempt to develop noble character and virtue for individual and for the community. It requires thorough and calculated planning to obtain learning success.

The present research studies and analyzes the addition of character education for mentally retarded student by analyzing: a) the implementation of character education in education curriculum in Indonesia, b) the development of special education curriculum since Indonesia independence period until the present, c) the effectiveness of Special Education Curriculum 2013 in implementing character education for mentally retarded student in special schools in West Java, and d) giving

recommendation to improve the quality of character education for mentally retarded student in special school using Special Education Curriculum 2013.

Method

The study was conducted qualitatively to analyze the development of character education curriculum in Indonesia and Curriculum employed in special schools. The study involved 100 special education teachers who had participated in K13 training in West Java, and they were selected randomly. Character education addition to special Education Curriculum is made to the component that directly affects the success of the learning process. It is done especially on the procedure of learning program development, educational service standard, teacher's strategy, and students' learning success. It focuses on the procedure of instructional set development, including assessment, lesson planning, learning implementation, and evaluation. The study used interview, observation, and documentation as the analysis technique.

Character education

Character education is not an instant improvement program that instantly transforms the students, yet it is a part of life and educational activities at school. Character education, as a part of school activities, is the responsibility of all involving parties. It strengthens the quality of the existing character and develops the character values that are in line with culture, norms, and value held by the institution/ school.

Its general character is identified by good behavior, an individual who is able to follow the rule. Character education is viewed as identical to how the students well-behaved, can follow the rule, not violating the school rule, and can complete the task and is graduated with a satisfactory score. The description as mentioned earlier is relevant with character education, yet has not been adequate. Character education always refers to attitude, behavior, motivation, and wider skill. It is more than avoiding unexpected social behavior. Character education at school begins in classroom practice. Classroom is a place to strengthen, to model, and to practice daily positive character, accordingly, teacher plays as the main actor of character education. Teachers have strategic role in character education, especially in learning process. They take roles by creating conducive learning environment to develop character values in every classroom learning activity, starting from developing effective lesson plan. If teachers, school principals, and all stakeholders want their students to have and exhibit positive character, teachers should possess different ways of thinking about educational system that allows students to grow with character and dignity. From school managerial perspective, character education is a school-based activity that aims to systematically form student's positive behavior, which is formulated in school programs. Character education, as a program, should be designed through a collaboration with other community institutions in order to directly and systematically form the youth's behavior by clearly influencing non-relativistic values seen as resulting in such a behavior. (Nuci 2014: 131)

Character education in Indonesia is a national movement to improve student' character to be in line with the purpose of national education. As a national movement, character-building creates schools that are able to develop ethics, responsibility, and to treat the youth by modeling and to teach good character that

emphasize the universal values. These all are provided in purpose as schools, regional, and provincial government's proactive attempt to internalize the students with the core values, such as caring, honesty, impartiality, responsibility, and respect both to oneself and others. (Barkowitz 2005 : 2) Based on the description as mentioned above, school and the educator are responsible for providing an innovative learning environment that continuously integrates the core values of character education. The core values of character education are respect, responsibility, impartiality, and hard work (Anderson 2000 : 139). In Indonesia, character education is stipulated by Presidential Regulation no. 87 of 2017 on The Strengthening of Character education, this presidential regulation stipulates the character education values that are used as the core values of character education in Indonesia, namely, religious, nationalism, mutual cooperation, autonomy, and integrity. Character education that is carried out in school should integrate positive values into each aspect of daily activities at school (Mike Frye 2002: 2). This is in line with the Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture no. 20 of 2018 on Character education Strengthening, article 1 paragraph (1), which reads that character education is an educational movement under the responsibility of educational institution to strengthen the students' character through spiritual and emotional development, intellectual development, and physical development by involving collaboration among education institutions, family, and community, as a part of National Mental Revolution Movement.

Character education, following the description as mentioned earlier, consists of moral/value, attitude, behavior, positive values, which are done purposefully and systematically by all stakeholders. It is done by referring to source of values, and is integrated into all educational activities at school. It can be actualized and exist in every learning activity carried out by teachers and education staff at school, or education performed by parents at home.

Character Education in Indonesia

Character is the combination of attribute, attitude, and behavioral pattern that forms an individual's identity, making them different from one another. Every individual develops a unique character. It is shown by a unique combination of attribute and behavioral pattern. Character education in school education refers to the area of educational system that is related to student's attribute and behavior development. It encourages better personal and academic function, positive interpersonal relationship, school environment that is conducive for learning and academic achievement, adults' role success, and civil community. Character is described as relatively stable personal trait that becomes a foundation for behavior in high standard of value and norms (Budimansyah2012: 3). Character consists of three interrelated elements, namely, moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral behavior. Good character consists of knowing good things, willingness to have good things, and doing good things. (Lickona 2012 : 82). From Islamic Perspective, the definition of character is close to (or similar to) *Akhlaq*, it refers to human spontaneity in behaving, or behavior that has been integrated within one's self, which appears spontaneously (Tafsir 2000 : 15). *Akhlaq* is originated from word *khalafa*, which means 'a creation' or behavior caused by good deed, or behavior with good connotation and that is in line with Islamic norms. *Akhlaq* is also equal to morals and ethics that discuss the human manner to communicate with God, with other humans, or with the universe (Sauri 2016 : 160-

161). *Akhlaq* contains the element of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor element, which is implemented in human life and activity. *Akhlaq*, as a component of Islamic teaching, has a parameter, the Islamic scholars provide *Akhlaq* parameter with all behaviors that considered good by Al-Quran and the Prophet's sunnah. Good behavior can be measured universally such as being just, obeying parents, doing good for friends, being friendly, helping others, being humble, patient, and forgiving. Shar'i teaching is viewed as a good behavior by major religions in the world. For Muslim people, character education can be done by educating student's *Akhlaq* as an ikhtiar, considering that *Akhlaq* is universal moral and ethics (Syauri, 2013: 24)

Character education in Indonesia has been implemented even before Indonesia gain its independence, it is carried out religious educational institutions such as pesantren. Formal Character education in Indonesia is implemented and stated in education curriculum since Indonesia Independence Day (17 August 1945) which is implemented in civic education. From 1945 until 1977, Indonesia's curriculum underwent a number of adjustments, yet, civic education is not changed and is maintained. Curriculum change that is related to character education was done in 1977. In Curriculum 1977, character education is integrated into Pancasila Moral Education (PMP), by curriculum structure change in 1977, character education was asserted in PMP, it referred to the value system, i.e., Pancasila. the core values of pancasila are 1) belief in the one and only god, 2) just and civilized humanity, 3) the unity of Indonesia 4) democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives 5) social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia. In 1984, Indonesia Education Curriculum was changed, and character education was structurally changed from PMP to Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKN), substantially, the source of values still refers o Pancasila as the main source of values, with an addition of civic education. In 1994, Education Curriculum was once again changed, Character education is particularly implemented in Civic Education, or returned to the structure of Curriculum 1945. In 2004, Indonesia Education Curriculum experienced a change by the implementation of School-based Curriculum (KTSP), within this change, character education did not experience any change, it was still implemented through civic education subject. KTSP is implemented along with school autonomous policy/school-based management. During this implementation, curriculum development became the school responsibility. Following the global transformation, in 2013, KTSP was transformed into Curriculum 2013. The fundamental change in this curriculum is the presence of Core Competence (KI), it is the main competence comprising religious (KI-1), social (KI-2), knowledge (KI-3), and skill (KI-4) competence. Character education in K-13 structure is implemented in religious and character education and Pancasila and Civic Education. Character education in K-13 is developed based on KI-1 and KI-2.

Special Education Curriculum

Special education in Indonesia had existed even before Indonesia gained its independence. After Indonesia's independence, special education in Indonesia has experienced some curriculum changes. From 1945 until 1977, special schools in Indonesia did not have special education curriculum, they employed regular school curriculum, with some adaptation and modification for the purpose of students with special needs. In 1977, Indonesia Government stipulated Special Education Curriculum, it was goal-oriented (institutional, instructional, curricular), b) procedure

of development of instructional system (PPSI), c) subject-integrative (Religion, PMP, and social science subject), d) its principle was : flexibility, efficiency, goal-oriented effectiveness, and e) long-life learning. In 1984, Special Education Curriculum was revised, this revision contained learning guidelines, subjects, guidance and counseling, and evaluation. In this curriculum 30% of lesson hours are devoted to Bahasa Indonesia. The learning activities were carried out based on 'how students learn', not 'what students learn'. In Curriculum 1984, teachers took role as the implementer of curriculum, the teacher's responsibility is related to the learning activity. All programs had been designed by the government; after ten years of implementation of Curriculum 1984, the improvement was made by designing curriculum 1994. There were improvements in curriculum structure of special elementary school, special junior high school, special senior high school. Besides, there was an obligation to add the local subject and vocational program for junior and senior high school level. In 2004, Special Education Curriculum was revised following the changes in Regular Curriculum, it became Competence-based curriculum. The curriculum development is carried out based on students' needs assessment. Curriculum 2004 took effect in 2006 with improvements in Standard Competency (SK) and Basic Competency (KD) (Sunardi 2010). In 2013, Indonesia Government stipulate Curriculum 2013, or known as K-13. In K-13, standard competence is changed into Core competence, it is described by Basic Competence (KD), K-13 is more flexible, especially regarding the learning program development because the evaluation is measured based on indicator, minimum mastery criteria is determined by the teacher based on the assessment result. In K-13, character education is asserted in "Religious and Character Education" subject. K-13 is implemented in all special schools in Indonesia in 2015. Character education in K-13 is developed not only in religious and character education subjects and Pancasila and Civic Education.

The Effectiveness of Adding Character Education to Curriculum 2013

Substantially, Special Education Curriculum has contained character education through religious and character education and Pancasila and Civic Education subjects. The curriculum contains two core competencies that can be used as the basis of character education, KI-1 and KI-2. Adding character education to lesson plan does not factually change the structure of the lesson plan; however, to strengthen the character values developed based on KI-1 and KI-2, competence achievement indicators are made. The addition of indicator of character education, in addition to refers to KI-1 and KI-2, it refers to five main character values determined in Presidential Regulation no. 82 of 2017, namely religious, nationalism, autonomy, mutual cooperation, and integrity. Those five values become the reference to build the character of discipline, autonomy, and responsibility. For the purpose of learning activities for mentally retarded student, needs assessment is required. Needs assessment is mandatory in order to find out the students' level of development and skill. Based on needs assessment results, the teacher can map values required to build the target character. Based on the analysis result above, adding character education to K-13 does not change the structure of the curriculum. However, it requires additional procedure in designing lesson plans, requiring teachers to develop character value assessment. The analysis result found that the addition of character education in Curriculum 2013 is quite effective, the addition of character assessment procedure

does not affect the content change, instead, it strengthens the content of special education Curriculum 2013.

Based on the evaluation of teacher's comprehension of the Special Education Curriculum 2013, it was found that not all teachers possess good comprehension on Special Education Curriculum 2013. 20% of special education teachers have excellent comprehension of Special Education Curriculum 2013, 34% of them have good comprehension of Special Education Curriculum 2013, 27% of them have fair comprehension, while 19% of them have poor comprehension of Special Education Curriculum 2013.

It was found that not all teachers understand the strategy of adding character education for mentally retarded student. 33% of the special education teachers found it difficult to develop character education in Curriculum 2013.

Based on the implementation of character education carried out by the special education teacher. In general the teacher's teaching activity is dominated by lecturing (65%), training activities (15%), modeling (10%), conditioning (5%) and habituating (5%). With this condition, the nature of character education is information regarding values or knowledge about moral/character.

Based on the discussion as mentioned earlier, the main problem that arises in the addition of character education in Special Education Curriculum 2013 lies in human resources, i.e., teacher. The teacher's problem lies in the curriculum mastery and classroom implementation.

Recommendation

Based on the result of the study, the researcher proposes some recommendations as follow.

1. The procedure of character education program development for mentally retarded student should pay attention to the students' developmental level.
2. Teacher training is necessary to improve teacher's competence in developing lesson plan, assessments, learning activities, particularly in integrating character education into learning process.
3. It is recommended to conduct further studies to find out the character education program that suits the learning characteristic and needs of mentally retarded student.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of character education in Special Education Curriculum 2013 for mentally retarded student is determined by the accuracy of the procedure addition, starting from needs assessment, lesson plan designing process, the implementation of learning activities, and evaluation. Adding the procedure of character education program development in Special Education Curriculum 2013 should be done in order to integrate the character values into student's learning activity. It should be done by still referring to five main character educations in Indonesia, i.e., religious, nationalism, autonomy, mutual cooperation, and integrity, by utilizing local wisdom

to develop the autonomy, discipline, and responsibility of mentally retarded student. The strengthening of character education for mentally retarded student requires the values that are integrated into learning activities in the form of task analysis.

There were still teachers who find it difficult to develop character education program at school. Accordingly, it is necessary to develop teachers through educational activities and training to strengthen character education.

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