CHARACTER EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Abstract : Children's good characters should be formed since their early time growing up because it is an individual's set of psychological characteristics that influence person's ability and inclination for function morally, as Marvin Berkowitz said (William Damond, 2002). Besides, Dimermen (2009:9), educational prationers identified 10 characters which have to be developed in children such as: 1) respect, 2) responsibility, 3) honesty, 4) empathy, 5) fairness, 6) initiative, 7) courage, 8) perseverance, 9) optimism, 10) integrity.

These characters can be transferred by school as an agent of education, called character education. Megawangi (2004: 95) said that character education is a way to educate children in order to decide wise decision and practice it in regular life, so they can give positive contribution for environment. Moreover, character education is an education to develop good character from children, make them able to judge which one right or wrong, care deeply about the right and then doing what they believe to be right.

Shortly, character education can be internalized habituation about what is right, so that student become understand (cognitive) about what is right and what is wrong, and can feel (affective) the values of good thing and always trying to do that (psychomotor). Character education has to consist moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action. It is related to the habit, so it has to be practiced all the time.

Moreover, build the good character needs communities' character including family, school, religious institution, information media, government, and all supported component close to the young generation. The roles of school in this case are stated in learning process, habituation, extracurricular, and socialize. To develop character from children, school should not create a new curriculum but must integrate all national system which has been strong basic in formal education world. That is the implication of the character education.

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Last but not least, the best way in forming good character for children is through the model. Teacher here is the main component who plays important role in giving kinds of good examples, even by interaction with the student, routine activities, or spontaneous and incidental activities in the school. From those points above we hope that our young generation has much capability not only in cognitive side, but also in their attitude, manner, and their personality.

KEYWORDS: *character, education, early childhood*

One of the globalization effects in Indonesia is the conversion of paradigm and perception from Indonesian civilization. They know that in the future the competition to get a good job will be more difficult because our competitor not only from domestic workers but also from the foreign workers. Good works has closer connection to good education, so in order to solve that problem parent in this case trying hard to prepare their children with the best education since their early childhood. Many schools offering different curriculum in different methods, but most of them only focus on academic capability. The main important thing for parents, schools, and society is how to achieve the high mark in academic score then children spend most of their time to study and study their lesson in school which only focus on academic capability, besides their attitude. Moreover, children will grow up carrying the assumption that they have to get a good mark in study no matter how to get it even though by the wrong ways.

We may think that school is factory to produce people like a machine. Thinking and acting like what the owner want. The primary characteristics of the school like this are the **uniformity, mechanistic, and relation. Student is only as an object** not as a subject.

School with the **uniformity** means the standardization of the rules and norms. Student have to learn the same lessons and think that every student is the same individual, and study with the same ways. No place for the characteristic, unique and the gifted individual. We will consider doing a mistake if we are difference from the standard system. In order to do the same way, learning process must be supervised, and it will be a supervisor.

School with the **mechanistic relation** means the relation and the atmosphere are mechanics, so those are formal relation and hierarchy. There are no emotional bonding and informal relation. Teacher rules are very rigid

and they teach like a king of the kingdom. This is the model of school which is not put the attention to social and human being relationship between teachers and the students. The only matter for this kind of school is to reach the target and to provide output as their standard.

School with the paradigm **student as an object** means treat the student like a passive object who should become the last product. In this production process, teacher act like an operator who works with the same way in order to have same product for the end. So, in this type of school student not allowed to be a subject, student not allowed to interact actively with the other student and the teacher, and the last but not the least student not allowed to take a responsible for the learning process, ignore their feeling, interest and dreams.

We know that education in Indonesia have been lost their character education, such as:

1. Increasing the number of corruption
2. Lack of the disciplines
3. Lack of the nationalism
4. Lack of the cross culture understanding
5. Lack of the sense of importance
6. Lack of the awareness of religion
7. Lack of the character and national identity

Parents, schools and the society ignore the basic principle of education, which is to shape good character in children. Marvin Berkowitz, Professor of Character Education in University of Missouri St. Louis defined the character as an individual's set of psychological characteristics that effect that person's ability and inclination for function morally (William Damond, 2002).

Dimermen (2009:9), education practitioner identified 10 characters which have to develop in children, they are: 1) respect, 2) responsibility, 3) honesty, 4) empathy, 5) fairness, 6) initiative, 7) courage, 8) perseverance, 9) optimism, 10) integrity.

These characters can be transferred by school as an agent of education called character education. Character education is an education to develop their good character, which use to judge what is right, care deeply about it, and then do what they believe to be right, even when the student face the pressure from without and temptation from within.

Megawangi (2004:95) said that character education is a way to educate children so they can decide wise decision and practice it in regular life, and then they can give positive contribution to the environment. The values of the character that have to be transferred to the children are the universal values including all the religion, custom and culture that will be agreed with that. These universal values must be believed by the entire citizen although they came from different culture and religion.

A. THE PURPOSES OF THE CHARACTER EDUCATION IN SCHOOL

The purposes of the character education in school are:

1. To help student develop their willingness potencies and practice it in their mind, their aptitude, and their way of speaking.
2. To help the student prepare themselves to be a better man in the future.
3. To help the student facing the challenges of the globalization and at the same time make them get opportunity to develop and give contribution to the other people and humanity.

B. INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS FROM THE CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL

To increase the effectiveness from the character education in school, we should be transformation. The transformation is not only in school but also the environment that influence the process and the output of the education in school, including the institutions which make and run the education.

We have to transform all aspects. Start from the way of looking the meaning of education, development of the teacher capacities, and also to assess the values of education successfully.

1. To transform the mindset of education

It means transform the mindset of the school, student and the intelligence, which are:

- a. School as a communities not a factory

Still, there are wrong mindsets about school that student as material, teacher as a machine and the curriculum as a product of the program.

The output of the program is a graduation which is the standardization by using a National Examination. This mindset is become one of the reasons why the atmosphere of the schools become mechanistic, formal, hierocratic and product orientation.

In order to transform the mindset, school should become a learning communities, whereas student and teacher as a member of the communities that have roles and responsible for learning together. In this community, we have the ideal ideas, dreams, trust worthy, respecting each other and willingness to share. There are lots of informal and sincerely interaction. They are helping each other to develop and learning together.

b. Students are not the empty glasses

Means that teacher will give the same lesson and methods for all students. It is called uniformity in school where is no tolerate to diversity and individuality, even the values of successful become same.

In order to transform the paradigm, we need to look the student as a seed which have different potencies to be an excellent one. School should become the place for facilitate the seed to grow and develop their excellent potencies.

c. Multiple intelligences mindset

There are many types of intelligences, called multiple intelligences. These differences need to be supported to develop maximally, and become the characteristic of each student.

2. Develop the atmosphere from the environment to support character education

Atmosphere of learning includes the atmosphere in the school, classroom and the interpersonal interaction.

a. Positive emotion increases the effectiveness of learning

Positive emotions are happiness, optimistic, respect each other, and support each other. They will make more creative, open minded, constructive, create a new idea, and increasing the way to think lateral. Someone will do the best through good mood. They will think positively and optimistic to reach the goal.

Student will reach their best when:

- Teacher try to understand and aware of student needs, feels, interests and capabilities.
 - Teacher try to create good atmosphere in the classroom by providing nice talk and full of gladness.
 - Teacher show warmness and positive thinking to the student.
- b. Atmosphere to support the importance of the character
- Physical environment
Means that school environment teaches the good character. For example, student must keep clean and keep green the school environment.
 - Social environment
It means the warmness interaction between teacher and student. Respectful each other, no hurt feeling, and teacher here become a good model for the student.
 - Extracurricular
Many kinds of extracurricular that support character building, for example: sport, art, etc. These activities will be a media for student to learn, to share, to empathy, to care, build a team work, take a responsible, and develop leadership and self confidence.

3. Develop the learning process

Student learns the lesson, and at the same time they will learn how to be a good character.

a. Role model

Teacher can help the student to learn about good character by becoming a model for the student. They can also introduce the hero who has good and strong character to be a model for student.

b. Inside-out become outside-in

In order to build the good character, teacher must give the awareness to student about the values of the goodness. This awareness will influence the way they think, spoken and behave in all aspects of live and it will become their habit. Storytelling, reading a book, and

- watching a movie are the media to give awareness about the importance to have good character.
- c. Teacher center become Student center
Character learning can be designed as a learning process where the student as a center of leaning. Students have many opportunities to get involve and to take responsible for the learning process, and teacher here becomes a facilitator for learning process.
 - d. Implicit become explicit
It means that learning the character from the unconscious awareness in order to have good character naturally. Learning process will support the situation to make student know the kindness from their feeling and understanding, without shown from the teacher. Student will express themselves through observe the situation.
 - e. Formal become informal
Process to build the character can be made in the formal and informal situation. Students have to obey the rules consist of talking nicely and good behave in the school.
 - f. Learning the character together through learning the lesson
Teacher teaches the lesson and at the same time he shows the good character like; respectful, etc.
 - g. Development of cognitive ability
Teacher create dilemma situation, and ask the student to assess the situation based on moral aspect.
 - h. Focus on the strengthens
Student will be appreciated and get a reward if they have a good character.
4. Develop the lesson of study
- a. Focus on character education while teaching a lesson
Teacher should combine between lesson and character learning.
 - b. Developing the values through the contextual knowledge
Students have to know the essential values from learning in order to practice in the regular day.

5. Developing the criteria and to assess education successfully
 - a. Character learning orientation
The successful in learning process not only from good mark at the lesson but also from the good character
 - b. Appreciate the movement of learning
The entire of stakeholder have competencies to assess the good character of student.
6. Developing the capacities of the teacher
It means to change the perception of the teacher for their roles, knowledge and creativity to teach the student. Teacher should develop their character too.
7. Team work with the students' parents
Parents are the primary team with the teacher to teach character education to the student.

Character education is processes that never stop and must go on for a life time. It is needed in order to be a better person, better citizen and a better human being.

Shortly, character education, not only to teach what is right and what is wrong but more than that. It can be internalized habituation about what is right, so that student become understand (cognitive) about right and wrong, and can feel (affective) the values of good thing, and also trying to do that all the time (psychomotor). Good character education shouldn't only consist moral knowledge, but also "loving the good" (moral feeling), and moral action. So, the character education is related to the habit which is has to be practiced all the time.

Because the character education is a habit, building the good character need a communities of character consisting of family, school, religion, institution, mass media, government and all the community component which is related to the young generation. All the communities character should give role models intervention, consistent habitual, and rewarding. In addition, character building need a role model, intervention

with learning process, training, consistent habitual for the long term, consistent ways and rewarded.

Role of the school for the character education by community's character must be put on in the middle. In this context, Lockwood (1997) defined the character education which is any school initiated program, design in cooperation with other community institutions, to shape directly and systematically the behavior of young people by influencing explicitly the non relativistic values believed to bring about the behavior. So that, the role of the school is becoming community's character in the character education through learning process, habituation, extracurricular and the cooperation with the family and society.

School become the bridge to connect character education in the small education and in the family-society throughout the values of the students' ordinary live in learning and empowering school committee in order to participate parents-society to increase the qualities character education.

C. BASIC PRINSIPLES IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

There are 4 basic principles to do in character education; continuously, every lesson in school, self development, and culture. They are values of education that not to be taught but developed by learning process and the entire of the student practice it with active and in delightful way. That means the implication of the character education should not creating the new curriculum but have to be integrated to the all national education system which is have been the strong basic to develop the character.

In this system, we can use the special approach to develop character education. They are role model, learning, empowering and culturing, and then followed by rewarding all the time. The last is an evaluation.

Role model is become important key and come from the teacher that continuously giving the example of the nice thing in every way and every interaction with their student for the routine activities and the spontaneous along incidental activities. In addition, school will always be a place that provides learning is a fun process.

For the future, we hope that we have the young generation that smart in their cognitive ability, along with good attitude, manners, honest and hard worker.

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