

## Strategy and Implementation of Character Education in Senior High Schools and Vocational High Schools

Zurqoni,<sup>1</sup> Heri Retnawati,<sup>2</sup> Janu Arlinwibowo,<sup>3</sup> Ezi Apino<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

Recently character education has been holding an important role for improving the human resources quality. This study aims to describe the strategy, the implementation and the results of character education in senior and vocational high schools in four provinces within the Java Island, Indonesia. The study was a phenomenology-type qualitative research. The data collection utilized a questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The participants in the study were 108 senior and vocational high school teachers from four provinces in Indonesia namely Yogyakarta Special Region, Central Java, West Java and Banten, Indonesia. The data analysis was conducted by implementing the Creswell's steps. The results of the study showed that the strategy that the schools might implement in character education would be providing the character building facilities and designing good programs of character development. The schools implemented character education by providing role models, intervention, consistent habituation, and reinforcement. The results of the implementation yielded good results for the students' character development. The obstacles that the schools had within character education were the students' heterogeneity, the society's paradigm which considered that the focus of the schools should be the cognitive development and limited facilities.

*Key words: Strategy, character education, implementation, obstacles.*

### Introduction

Education plays an important role in shaping the well-qualified human resources in order to be competitive in the era. In Indonesia, the objective of education, as stated in the Law Number 20 Year 2003, is to develop the students' potentials in order to be pious toward and faithful in Lord the Almighty, be healthy, be knowledgeable, be capable, be creative, be independent and be democratic and responsible human beings and citizens. Referring to this objective of national education, the students should have not only good hard skills but also good soft skills. Thereby,

<sup>1</sup> Assoc. Prof., Islamic State Institute of Samarinda Indonesia, zurqoni@iain-samarinda.ac.id

<sup>2</sup> Assoc. Prof., Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta Indonesia, heri\_retnawati@uny.ac.id

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer, Muhammadiyah Health Sciences School of Kudus Central Java Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Alumnae, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta Indonesia

the development of both hard skills and soft skills should be integrated into the educational processes.

The educational process starts from the learning activities that have been conducted formally, informally and non-formally. In order to ensure the accommodation of developing the hard skills and the soft skills within the learning process in each educational unit, the educational objective should be formulated through the following three aspects namely the cognitive aspects, the affective aspects and the psychomotor aspects. This is to create a balance between the students' intellectual capacity and their attitude/characters. The students who have good intellectual but who have not been equipped with good attitude/characters do not have any assurance that they will be successful in dealing with the era. Even the learning process that only focuses on the cognitive aspect tends to create apathic students and such students will be unable to interact with their social environment. Thereby, the development of attitude/character aspect is heavily demanded within the learning process.

The importance of good characters for the students is to provide them with necessary skills in order to overcome multiple challenges and issues within their social environment. By having good characters, they are expected to be able to implement and to improve the moral values and the ability as well as to manifest these moral values in their daily life (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016), to be able to make good decisions responsibly (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999) and to be good citizens (Çubukçu, 2012; McElmel, 2002). Even by having the good characters, the students will be inclined to improve their learning achievements (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). Such a situation describes that good characters will not only contribute to developing the socio-emotional aspects but also to influencing the students' cognitive aspects.

Good characters take the form of good behaviors and they should be displayed in daily life. Such a form of good characters will certainly be initiated by the knowledge toward the good characters. Thereby, good characters should have three inseparable components, namely the aspects of moral knowing, the aspects of moral feeling and the aspects of moral action (Lickona, 1991). The aspects of moral knowing are related to establishing moral awareness, knowing moral values, taking other people's perspective into account, embedding moral reasoning and considering the moral in

decision making process. Then, the aspects of moral feeling are related to understanding and performing conscience, gaining self-esteem by performing good values, having empathy toward other people, loving the good, performing self-control, being open toward self-limitations and striving forward to humanity. Next, the aspects of moral action are related to the skills in turning the moral sense and assessment into better and competent actions, in taking the most appropriate decisions, in maintaining the emotion, in enduring within pressures and in habituating oneself toward performing good attitude in any situation. These aspects will be the foundation of developing good characters and in order to manifest these good characters there should be strategies that might be implemented within the educational domain.

Currently, the development of character values in education is known as character education. Character education is defined as a planned and systematic approach in terms of self-respect, responsibility, honesty etc. for being a good citizen (Çubukçu, 2012), as the deliberate attempt to influence the behavior of students through customizing repeatedly (Abu, Mokhtar, Hassan, & Suhan, 2015), as a school-based process for promoting the personal development among the youths by means of virtue and moral values development (Pattarro, 2016) and as a special curriculum that should be developed in order to teach the students about the quality and the characteristics of good characters (Almerico, 2014). The objective of character education is to grow the students' capacity in understanding the moral values and in using this capacity to take "good and best" actions as well as to understand the real objectives of their life (Battistich, 2005). Furthermore, character education also plays a role in improving the quality of educational implementation results in schools which leads to the achievement of students' character and nobility establishment in overall, integrated and balanced manner according to the governing standard competencies (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). Character education also has a positive relationship to the academic and affective success and to the establishment of positive social perception (Diggs & Akos, 2016; Thompson, 2002). Recalling the importance of the role the character education plays, we should not put aside character education anymore; instead, it should be one the main axes within educational processes.

The action that might be taken in order to develop character education is integrating it into the governing curriculum within the schools (Abu, Mokhtar, Hassan, & Suhan., 2014; Almerico, 2014; Çubukçu, 2012; Kose, 2015; Lee, 2009; Pattarro, 2016; Stiff-Williams, 2010; Thompson, 2002;

Wardono, Waluya, Kartono, Sukestiyarno & Mariani, 2015). Many countries all over the world have been providing special attention toward character education within their educational system such as the United States of America, Taiwan (Lee, 2009), Sweden and Turkey (Demirel, 2009). Principally, these countries are aware that education is a matter of preparing not only the human resources who have good intellectual capacity but also the ones who have good characters. In Indonesia, such a special attention have been provided through the implementation of Curriculum 2013.

Curriculum 2013 focuses not only on the students' cognitive development but also on the students' attitude improvement, both the spiritual one and the social one, and on the students' skills development. This aspect is reflected in the content standard that is implemented in Curriculum 2013 (Mendikbud RI, 2013). The depth of the content standard emphasizes more on the conversion of the attitude into a good behavior, on the higher order thinking skills (HOTS) and on the necessary skills in overcoming the global challenges. In Curriculum 2013, there are 18 character components that are identified and these characters come from the religion, the culture and the national education objective. These characters are: honesty, tolerance, discipline, hardworking, creativity, independence, democratic, curiosity, spirit of nationality, rewarding achievement, friendliness/communicativeness, love of peace, fondness of reading, environmental care, social care, responsibility, and religiosity (Kemendiknas RI, 2011). These character values are exercised through the teaching and learning processes in the classroom and through the other activities that occur within the school environment, both academic and non-academic ones (extracurricular activities). Through the integration of character education into the curriculum, students should not be separated from their social environment (Wardono et al., 2015). In other words, although character education takes place in school (Çubukçu, 2012; McElmeel, 2012), the students' social environment still plays an important role in the character development. This statement shows that character education belongs not only to parents' responsibility but also to society's responsibility since the society, as part of the students' social environment, also participates in their character development.

The implication from the integration of character education into the curriculum is that there should be a strategy for implementing character education in the teaching and learning process within the

schools. Several experts propose that there are multiple strategies that might be implemented in character education within the schools. Several strategies that might be implemented in developing the character values and that have been the core the character education are the role model, intervention, consistent habituation, and reinforcement (Zuchdi, Prasetyo, & Masruri, 2011). Several activities that might trigger the development of good characters among the students are developing discipline and self-confidence as well as raising awareness and manners, engaging students in extracurricular activities and scouting activities, increasing students' self-development by organizing various competitions through student council activities and coaching talent interests through extracurricular activities (Nurhasanah & Nida, 2016). These strategies or methods might be referred by the teachers in exercising character education in teaching and learning processes within the schools.

The integration of character education into the teaching and learning process within the schools is initiated by the good role model that teachers provide. Thornberg & Oguz (2013) state that the main method in character education is the good role model that teachers provide within their interaction with the students. The intervention within character education is conducted through the use of learning models that have the content of character values such as Problem-Based Learning (Arofah, 2015; Jailani & Retnawati, 2016; Jailani, Sugiman, & Apino, 2017; Wardani, 2014) and Cooperative Learning (Matchett, 2009; Zakaria, Chin & Daud, 2010). In addition, in order to improve the moral and character values, multiple teaching techniques such as role playing, drama, simulation, educational games, debate, discussion, project, group-work, educational visitation, interview and brainstorming might be implemented (Chowdhury, 2016). Consistent habituation might be conducted through the implementation school regulation consistently, and reinforcement might be conducted through the celebration of religious and national days, social service and synergy establishment with the society and the parents.

In practice, the implementation of character education sometimes encounters several obstacles. Lee (2009) identifies at least four main problems within the process of character education namely: (1) there have been few teachers who have the professional capacity in the domain of morale and character education; (2) several parents object to taking part into the process of character education; (3) the students have many academic pressures and, as a result, they focus only on the

achievement of cognitive learning achievement; and (4) there are difficulties in maintaining character education continuously. In addition, Almerico (2014) states that one of the educator's challenges in conducting character education is related to the provision of necessary curriculum materials and the manner of teaching character education. These problems should be solved immediately in order that character education might be optimally implemented.

Based on the description above, it can be understood that character education should play an important role within the teaching and learning process. In Indonesia, the implementation of character education in Curriculum 2013 cannot run optimally. Such a situation shows that there should be a review in relation to finding the appropriate strategy in order to improve the students' characters and to identify the impact of the strategy implementation.

### **Purpose of Study**

The study is to describe the strategy, the implementation, and the results of character education as well as the obstacles of its implementation in senior and vocational high schools in four provinces of Java Island, Indonesia.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The study was phenomenology research that applied a mixed between quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach is used to estimate the mean score of teachers' assessment tendency toward character education. The strategy and obstacles in character education is analyzed by means qualitative approach.

### **Participants**

The participants in the study were 108 teachers with the following details: 61 senior high school teachers and 47 vocational high school teachers from all subjects. These teachers served as the representatives of all schools in four provinces in Indonesia with the following details: 18 teachers from Yogyakarta, 57 from Central Java, 24 from West Java, and 9 from Banten. These teachers taught in the schools that had implemented the 2013 Curriculum.

### **Data Collection**

The data were gathered using a questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Through the questionnaire, the teachers were asked to answer the questions regarding the strategy and the obstacle in implementing character education. They were also asked to assess the students' characters before and after implementing Curriculum 2013. The in-depth interview was conducted toward 25 teachers who had been selected so that the discussion would be focused on the strategy in implementing character education in relation to the role modelling, intervention, consistent habituation, and reinforcement as the strategy of implementing character education.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis was conducted both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data analysis was conducted by calculating the mean score of teachers' assessment tendency toward character education which resulted in the 18 character components containing and having been exercised in Curriculum 2013. The mean score before and after implementing Curriculum 2013 implementation was presented in a graph which was interpreted. The data analysis regarding the strategy and the obstacle in implementing character education was conducted by implementing the Creswell (2013) steps namely: (1) organizing the data; (2) reading and composing memo; (3) describing, classifying and interpreting the data into the code and the theme; (4) interpreting the data; and (5) displaying and visualizing the data. The overall data were then interpreted in order to gain an understanding of the teachers' strategy and obstacle in conducting character education.

### **Findings**

Curriculum 2013 as the governing curriculum nowadays mandated that the educational process should pay attention to the balance in the students' development within all domains, namely the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The development of affective domain became one of the foci in developing good characters namely honesty, tolerance, discipline, hardworking, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, spirit of nationality, love of nation, rewarding achievement, friendliness/communicativeness, love of peace, fondness of reading, environmental care, social care, responsibility and religiosity. The efforts to develop the affective domain in general is known as character education. The education that emphasizes characters has a crucial role in equipping the students so that they might have good personality and might display their

maximum potentials in order to survive and to provide benefits to the communal life. The age of senior and vocational high school is a period of transition from juvenile to adulthood; as a result, character development in this age becomes very important. The following explanation would be a description on the implementation of character education from the strategy, implementation, results, and obstacles within the implementation.

### **The Strategies of Implementing Character Education**

Schools should have a strategy in implementing good character education so that the educational process would be directed and be implemented well. The consequence of implementing character education is that schools should prepare multiple supporting facilities and multiple programs that might direct character education toward the pattern of all school members' routines or activities so that the pattern might be a catalyst in the character development. The strategy that should be implemented by the schools in preparing character education would be divided into two main aspects namely the facility preparation and school program preparation.

### **The Facility Preparation**

Religion becomes one of the aspects that are mandated by the curriculum to be developed. However, religion is considered as an aspect that might underlie the development of other characters. Thereby, the preliminary strategy that the schools should apply in the implementation of character education would be preparing the worshipping facilities. The availability of good worshipping facilities might provide wide flexibility toward the schools in implementing character education program or in civilizing the spiritual activities.

Creativity, independence, curiosity and fond of reading might be developed through an improvement toward the students' insight. Therefore, the facility for literacy programs, both for the printed literacy and the electronic literacy, should be provided by the schools. The strategy that should be implemented by the schools is to establish a school library or a small library (usually called a reading corner) in each classroom complete with the internet facilities. Actually, a library is a compulsory facility in each school but in the practice a library has not played an optimum function. Paying attention to the fact, the schools should pursue a certain strategy in order to revitalize their library so that the students would be interested in visiting it. The library appeal



might be improved by providing more various books or by installing extra facilities that would make the students feel more convenient.

A canteen has been a place that students mostly visit; as a result, this place becomes a strategic location for developing good characters. Schools should prepare a good canteen within the management of cleanliness in order to develop character of being disciplined and environmentally caring. Several schools design a canteen that is committed to minimizing the use of plastic bag and paper and to being disciplined in throwing the garbage and to the garbage bin. The canteen caretakers are briefed by the schools in order to take part in developing the character of loving the environment among the students. Some schools also have a strategy in developing honesty through the provision of canteen of honesty.

Recently schools have realized that the care toward the environment might provide a positive impact to the development of the students' characters. There have been many schools that have multiple strategies to provide good cleaning facilities in order to develop their students' characters. It is common to see various garbage cans or dust bins for different types of garbage, the greenhouse, the park, and the small plants in multiple vases around the schools. The provision of these facilities might develop the environmental care and, altogether with the implementation of other programs, might develop the character of being tolerant, being disciplined, hardworking, being independent and being responsible.

### **The School Programs**

The strategy of implementing character education does not stop in the facility provision, instead the strategy should be expanded to the program in order that the facility might be beneficial optimally in developing the students' characters. The main strategy that schools prepare in implementing character education is holding a socialization program regarding character education to all school members. The socialization program should be held not only for all school members but also for all school employees, including the cleaning service staff, the security officer and the canteen staff. The objective was that all members would have common perception and point of view so that they would be committed to pursuing the synergy in the implementation of character education.

All school members should be provided with direction in order that they would be able to be a good role model in accordance with their own portion. The principal might play his or her role on the school management, the teachers might play their role on the teaching and learning process, the employees might play their role through the administrative process, the security officers might play their role through discipline and security enforcement, the canteen staff might play their role through their commitment in providing clean canteen and the cleaning service staff might play their role through the cleanliness management; all school community members have their own role to play within the social interaction around the implementation of character education. Thereby, all school community members would understand their own role in defining the successful implementation of character education.

The direction that should not be forgotten is the direction toward the students' parents. The synergy between the school and the students' parents is the utmost prerequisite for the successful implementation of character education. This direction would minimize the conflict between the school's policy and the parents' perspective. The case occurring nowadays is result from the lack of synergy between the school and the parents; as a result, the school and the parents are blaming each other and this dispute causes the students' characters under-developed. The synergy between the school and the parents is important because outside the school, the parents have a fundamental role to play in developing the students' characters. There should be harmony and communication between the school and the parents within their efforts to develop the students' characters.

The socialization should also reach the students. The function of socialization for the students is to make them be aware of the objectives and the benefits of character education as their equipment in pursuing their life in the society and in the employment. Therefore, the students would have awareness and motivation that all of the conditioning that has been done through the process of implementing character education is a structured stage in developing multiple characters; these characters later on would be functional for the students in dealing with their external world. The socialization strategy for the students is expected to have positive synergy so that the process of implementing character education runs well and minimizes the obstacles.

Teachers have a big role to play within the implementation of character education because they should be able to implement the integrated learning process. Therefore, in general the schools design an in-house training (IHT) program as a strategy to strengthen the teachers' competencies since they are in the front line of character development. Through this strategy, it is expected that the teachers can manage the classroom well and design a learning process that might be the stimulant of developing the students' characters.

Another strategy that might support the implementation of character education is designing other supporting programs in order to maximize the situation and the facility within the schools. These programs might be designed in accordance with the condition of the school environment, for example: a school located near a river might implement a special program that displays the attention toward the river cleanliness; a school that is located near an orphanage might design a special program; a school that is problems with green area might design a reforestation program; the society who lives in the seashore might design a program for optimizing the marine resources and alike. Multiple strategies for implementing such a program in general would narrow to the establishment of multiple religious elements and attitudes.

### **The Implementation of Character Education**

The process of implementing character education is a follow-up action of the strategy that has been selected by the schools. The implementation might be categorized into four core programs namely role model, intervention, habituation, and reinforcement. Each core program has its own role in developing the students' characters. A role model is to provide an example of good behaviors toward the students. An intervention places a learning process or a situation in order that the students' characters would develop well. Habituation is to habituate good attitudes among the students, and reinforcement is to inculcate strong character values in the students. In general, the facts found in the field show that the implementation process has encompassed the four core programs of character development. The difference from one school to another lies in the details of implementation that have been adjusted to multiple aspects like social environment or cultural environment.

### **The Role Model**

The most fundamental implementation of role model in the process of character education is placing the principal, the teachers and all employees as an agent of role modeling. Thereby, paying attention to the good behaviors will be an utmost requirement for the principal, the teachers and all employees. Schools have a system of role modeling hierarchy within each agent. The principal will be the center of role modeling; as a result, he or she has the duty of providing ideal attitudes in front of all school community members. Below the principal, there are the teachers and the school employees who have the duty of providing ideal attitudes in front of the students. Furthermore, there is a hierarchy of students' role modeling in accordance with the class; the students from the higher class will be mandated to provide the ideal attitudes in front of those from the lower class. Such hierarchy will trigger the sense of being embarrassed to themselves if they do in-disciplinary action toward the superordinate or the senior. However, in general all school community members have the function of serving as the role model for their own environment so that the action of paying attention to their attitudes will also be conducted outside the schools.

The role modeling activities are displayed in the discipline from the beginning to the end of the school period. The teachers and the employees provide an example of discipline in accordance with the allotted time period. In general, the principal routinely goes to the school at the earliest time and goes home at the latest time compared to the teachers and the employees. The researcher found many cases in which the principal attended the school around 06:15 and they were ready to welcome the students in front of the school gate until the beginning of the school period, namely 07:00. The discipline also entails the beginning and the end of the learning process and the use of school uniform according to the school requirements.

The social attitudes of the principal, the teachers and the employees are a matter that has been emphasized in the aspect of role modeling. Most of the schools in the study have implemented the 5S movement (*senyum* or smile, *sapa* or greet, *salam* or shake hand, *sopan* or being polite and *santun* or being courteous). The principal, the teachers and the employees are in the front line of implementing this movement in order that the students will follow their leaders. The friendliness, the mutual respect and the development of sense of belonging among all school community members have been the objective of implementing the 5S movement. This movement take place

at the beginning of the school period where the principal and the appointed teachers welcome the students and the employees by implementing this 5S movement. The movement then continues to the daily activities both inside and outside the classroom and outside the school. In addition to implementing the 5S movement, several schools have also implemented another movement called “please, sorry and thank you”. The principal, the teachers and the employees were also in the front line of implementing this movement. “Please, Sorry and Thank You” movement becomes the usually spoken words within the social interaction; as a result, the sense of mutual respect and affection would develop among the school members. With these movements, automatically the culture of uttering good remarks will be maintained so that the students will be embarrassed if they do not utter good remarks.

The attitude that has been taught through the role model is empathy. Such attitude might be developed through role modeling activities. Schools have a program of empathy embodiment through the attention that principals, teachers and employees displayed toward the students and their colleagues. There are also specific programs or budgets that have been directed toward facilitating any school community members who have been ill or suffer from certain incidents. Naturally, human beings will respond to kindness with kindness especially when they suffer from certain incidents. Naturally as well, human beings will have satisfaction when they are able to help their fellows. Thereby, the empathy that is displayed will be easily widespread and deep-rooted. Every school has its own program in supporting empathy, for example *Sabtu Sodaqoh* (Charity Saturday), *Jumat Infaq* (Donation Friday) scholarship from teachers to students, social contribution to illness and pass-away and alike.

One of the fundamental core programs in good attitude establishment is spirituality. Role model should play an important role in its development. Principals, teachers, and employees are demanded to be a figure who obey the rules of their religion so that they might be a good role model in front of their students. In general, schools performed a communal prayer (*sholat jamaah*) for the Moslem teachers and employees to stimulate students to do the same thing. The researcher found several cases that schools held a communal prayer where the principal, the teachers or the employees became the lecturer (*khotib*) or the leader (*imam*). The principal, the teachers and the employees of other religions were also demanded to frequently hold interaction, to be spiritual and

to conduct the rules of their religion. By doing so, the students will actually see the figure who become their role model.

### **The Intervention**

Schools conduct intervention toward multiple activities so that the process of character education will be well implemented in accordance with the plan. The multiple activities that have been directed by schools are teaching and learning process, organizational activities, and discipline. In order to support the process of character education, schools situated the teaching and learning process integrated with multiple characters that have been identified in Curriculum 2013 namely honesty, tolerance, discipline, hardworking, creativity, independence, democratic, curiosity, spirit of nationality, love of nation, rewarding achievement, friendliness/communicativeness, love of peace, fondness of reading, environmental care, social care, responsibility, and religiosity. Teachers should be able to design and to implement such integrated learning as having been exercised in in house training programs.

Another intervention is conducted in order to control students' organizational activities. Schools carefully select programs of the organization in order that the implemented activities might participate in supporting the implementation of character education. However, intervention does not mean that the school will limit students in their creative process; in this case, the schools should be careful in situating themselves so that the students' creativity will still be sharpened and the organization will run in accordance with character education.

Curriculum conducts an intervention in the extracurricular activities by holding boy-scout for the X grade students. The boy-scout activities are functioned as the ones that exercise the students' character establishment. In addition to oblige the boy-scout activities, the schools in general also oblige the *Samapta* extracurricular activities, such as marching and country defense, in order to develop discipline, nationalism, patriotism, and peace loving attitude. Within the implementation, the schools often have cooperation with related institutions such as the National Army of Indonesia and the Police Department of Indonesia.

The efforts to implement character education are also pursued through the intervention in the students' discipline. The fact showed that there should be an emphasis that accompanies the role model in developing discipline. In schools, the researcher frequently found inspections of several aspects such as uniform, haircut, cigarette, sharp weapons and other objects that do not support teaching and learning process. The schools also conduct inspection of smartphone content in order that smartphones would not contain the uneducated pictures and videos. Such inspection might also be made as a means of identifying the students' activities so that those students who have been identified in committing uneducated activities might be directed immediately.

### **The Habituation**

Many examples that have been exercised and developed through the conditioning activities should be supported by the habituation program. Spiritual activities in general become the front line in the habituation process. The teaching and learning process in the form of habituation is initiated by praying, greeting, recite the holy Qur'an before starting the teaching and learning process, performing *sholat jamaah* and praying again before the class ended. In addition to those habituation efforts, many schools have various programs in terms of spiritual-based habituation programs such as *Jumat Sodaqoh* (Carity Friday), *Sabtu Mengaji* (Prayer Saturday), *Dhuha* in round, *Asmaul Husna* Morning, and Friday Prayer. The habituation by means of religion is expected to exercise the religious attitude that becomes the catalyst for the habituation of other good attitudes. The individuals who are accustomed to the religious attitude in general will take good actions in their activities.

The *adiwiyata* program is one of the character habituation programs that schools commonly apply. Nowadays many schools are aware that they are comfortable, clean, and conducive places for learning. As a result, many schools actively implement their *adiwiyata* programs. The students are taught about the importance of cleanliness through the responsibility of maintaining the classroom and environment cleanliness, minimizing the paper and plastic consumption, and managing the parks around the classroom. Such habituation programs develop the attitude of loving and being responsible for the environment, and at the same time, make students aware that there is a strong relationship between the health maintenance and the environment cleanliness. These programs are implemented in various ways, including cleaning movement, greening movement and garbage

management. Recently many schools have established a system of garbage bank and have maintained cooperation with garbage collectors. The garbage sorted from each classroom will sold and the money is saved in the school account. In addition, many schools have also established a movement of benefitting the garbage for handicraft, accessories and planting media. In general, schools hold inter-classroom competition for multiple *adiwiyata* programs and the winner of this competition is awarded with certain reward.

Then, in order to habituate honesty, schools run the canteen of honesty. Generally, it is managed by the students' organization or the vice principals for student affair. Students are provided with the freedom to purchase the product in this canteen independently and they should take their own change independently as well. In such a canteen system, there is a huge gap for the students to be dishonest since this canteen habituates honesty without any warning. Therefore, honesty will be dominantly influenced by the intrinsic motivation. The strategy for providing control, in general, will be calculating the expected profit and the actual profit. After the calculation, there will be a margin that reflects the honesty of the canteen customers.

Literacy movement is some sort of habituation that schools actively pursue. In order to develop the students' reading interest, schools customize them to read by providing specific time. Most schools applied this movement by allotting 15 minutes reading time prior to the beginning of the first lesson. There are also some schools that implement the similar strategy with different approaches, such as Reading Saturday and Taking a Break in the Library. The researcher found a peculiar case in which a school provided one hour period only for the literacy subject. This school taught multiple ethics toward books, reading trick, and motivation to read.

The effort to develop nationalism is made by habituating the students to sing both the regional and the national anthems. The time allocated for singing these songs is varied, depending on the policy of each school. There are some schools that begin the first lesson and end the last lesson by singing the national anthem and there are some other schools that combine the national anthem and the regional songs in opening and in closing the lesson. In relation to the nationalism development by means of songs, there are some schools that play the national anthem at the beginning or the end



of the school period and there are some other schools that play the national anthem during the break time.

### **The Reinforcement**

The last classification within the implementation process is the reinforcement of students' characters. Reinforcement is a stage of maintaining characters that had have developed well within the students through the role model, intervention and habituation. Reinforcement is conducted by means of both routine program and special program. The routine reinforcement is conducted once a week through the flag rising ceremony whose objective is to memorize the service of the national heroes and to develop multiple attitudes in both the system of the ceremony is conducted and the mandate that the ceremony instructor delivers.

In general, schools hold the celebration of certain events related to national days or religious days. They strive to maximize these moments by holding events such as discussions and competitions between the teachers and the students. In cooperation with their students' internal organization, they hold these events including Kartini Day Competition, religious discussion, and *Idul Adha* celebration in schools.

The characters inculcated in the students are strengthened by providing an experience of sharing and displaying empathy. The provision of a room among the students to take participation in the society might strengthen the characters developed within the school environment. Schools hold social contribution programs regularly, which involve the students in many places depending on the location of the schools. Students and teachers are conditioned to establishing cooperation in providing aids, goods and services. Another case that the researcher frequently found is the planting tree activities. Several schools have conducted the social contribution program by planting trees within the society.

Another effort that schools have made in order to encourage the students' discipline is displaying posters or billboard that contain rules, regulations and motivational words. In fact, the researcher often found that some schools display posters explaining the path of character development. Thereby, the students will understand that the process that they have experienced up-to-date is a

process of character building and they might spread such a process to the surrounding environment. The researcher also found a peculiar case: one school published a book of rules and information regarding the school development process and it is distributed to the students so that their parents might learn about the rules and the information as well. As a result, there is a common understanding among the school, the students and especially the parents of their commitment to obeying the rules and supporting the implementation of the school programs.

The implementation of character education should be supported by a strong synergy between schools and parents/foster parents. The students spent most of their time outside the school and in this period the parents/foster parents have a great power to exert the educational process. As a consequence, there should be a good cohesiveness between the school and the parents/foster parents within the implementation of character education. In order to maintain the communication with the parents, in general, the classroom teachers and the guidance and counseling teachers are placed in the front line. In the schools that have implemented the system of semester credit unit, the function of a classroom teacher is replaced by that of an academic advisor who has been together with his or her learning group for three years. According to the information provided by the schools, such a system gives very huge benefit in relation to the communication between schools and parents.

For the sake of achieving the objectives of character education, schools should not stand independently. In general, schools establish a good cooperation with the police departments especially the Sector Police Department, the Indonesian National Army especially, the Military District Command and the regional governments, especially the sub-regency and the village in order to achieve synergy in controlling the students' activities outside the school periods. The schools are aware that students' activities outside the school period are difficult to control and, therefore, the synergy with these parties might anticipate the worst situations immediately.

### **The Results of Implementing the Character Education**

The implementation of character education within Curriculum 2013 provides positive results toward the characters of the senior and vocational high schools from the four provinces in Java Island, Indonesia. From the data gathered through the questionnaire, there are differences between

the students' characters in Curriculum 2013 and those in the previous curriculum. Based on the opinions provided by the respondents, who were the principals and the teachers, character education in Curriculum 2013 might develop 18 characters demanded by the curriculum namely honesty, tolerance, discipline, hardworking, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, spirit of nationality-displaying, patriotism, achievement-appreciating, friendliness/ communicativeness, peace-loving, fondness of reading, environmental care, social care, responsibility and religiosity. The data on the comparison of the students' characters before and after the implementation of Curriculum 2013 are shown in Figure 1.

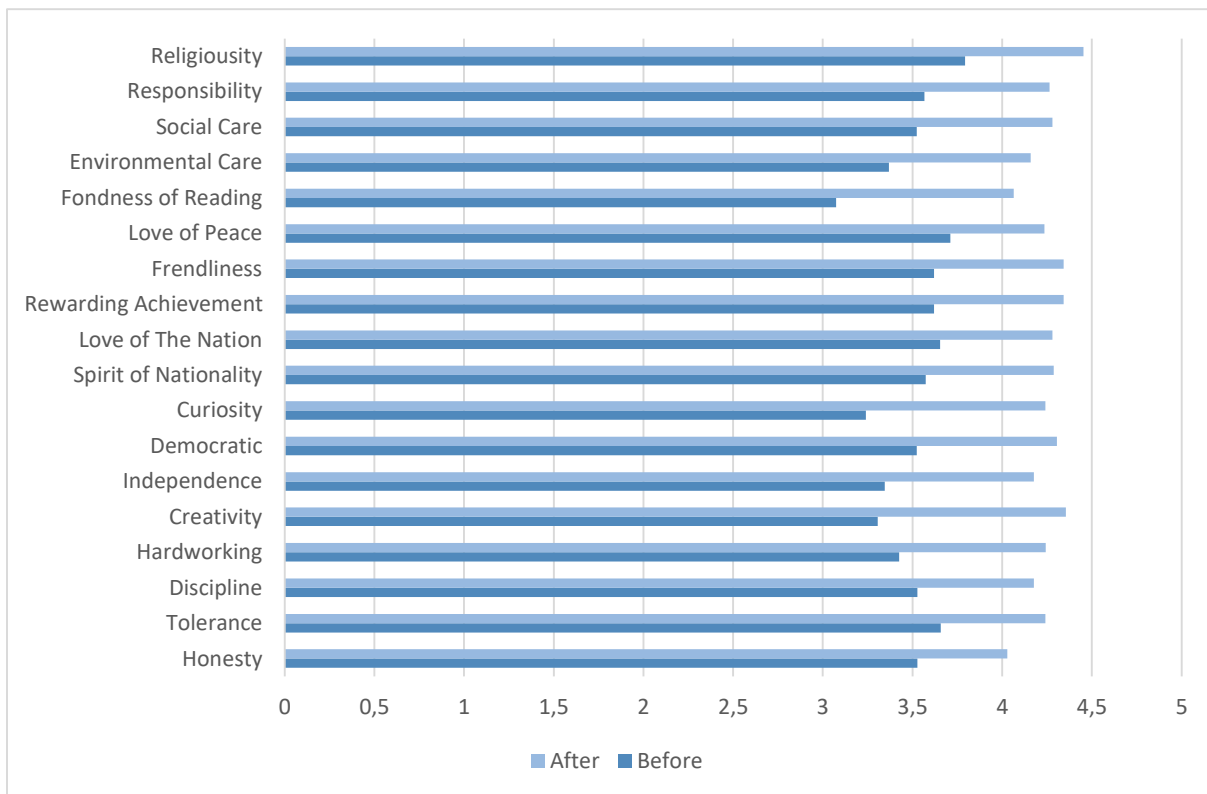


Figure 1. The Comparison on the Students' Characters Before and After the Implementation of Curriculum 2013

Based on the data in Figure 1, it is apparent that the difference is significant in the comparison of each character. This fact shows that in general schools are successful in implementing the character education of Curriculum 2013. The most significant difference lies in the aspect of creativity and curiosity. The development of both characters is caused by the fact that the curriculum demanded the scientific approach within the teaching and learning process. The scientific approach demands the student-centered learning process so that the students become more active in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. Such a teaching and learning process demands the students to

frequently have discussions in investigating and solving problems, and in executing projects so that their creativity and curiosity become sharpened. In addition to the significant difference in the two characters, the teaching and learning process by means of scientific approach also provides positive results to the development of independent and hardworking character.

The student-centered learning demands the students to have active discussions and to share their opinions. This process makes the students accustomed to having discussions in order to achieve common opinions. Such a situation made the students' attitude of being democratic to develop well. As a matter of reinforcement in dealing with the needs for the democratic attitude within the society, many schools design the election of the students' internal organization chief like the national election. These schools design the election of the students' internal organization chief very similar to the national election; there are oration, campaign, and voting.

Another character that prominently increased is fondness of reading. The literacy movement within schools becomes the reason behind the increasing students' reading interest. Before the implementation of Curriculum 2013, many teachers complained of the low students' reading interest. Reading is a skill; therefore, a student who has not been trained and accustomed to reading would sense that reading is a difficult activity. The cases that the researcher often found are the low interest, focus, and endurance in reading. The students easily get bored and sleepy when they read. The literacy movement provides some sort of habituation toward the students so that they have the skills followed by their hobby. Such habituation causes the students to sense that reading is very easy and fun.

Many *adiwiyata* strategies are sufficient to encourage the students to be sensitive and caring toward the environment. Similarly, the encouragement of social care develops the students' social empathy and care. The variation within the programs implemented by the schools, such as Clean Friday, Healthy Saturday, Donation Friday and alike, cause the character of being caring to develop well among the students. Several teachers admitted that the students would feel embarrassed if their surrounding became dirty, that the classroom cleanliness became the students' pride and that the students displayed empathy toward their peers who suffered from a financial problem. In one school, the researcher found a case in which a student could not afford to pay the

study tour expense because his parents had low financial condition and, in order to support this student, all of his classmates were willing to collect some money in order that the student might afford the study tour expense and, therefore, could join the study tour.

### **The Obstacles of Implementing Character Education**

In general, the implementation of Curriculum 2013 provides positive impacts on the development of the students' characters. The facts that the researcher found in the field showed that the 18 characters mandated by the curriculum are developed well among the students. However, this result might be maximally developed since the researcher still found many obstacles within the implementation process. The problem that has generally been encountered within the implementation process is the heterogeneous school conditions; it is very possible that character education is conducive in one school but it suffered from the facility-related problems in another school. Then, other schools still have difficulties in providing sufficient prayer facilities. These schools complained that they had too small prayer rooms, so that the praying process, especially in performing the *sholat jamaah*, should be conducted in shifts. Such a situation caused very limited time for *sholat* that should be conducted during the break, as a result, several students had difficulties in managing their break time.

The Information Technology (IT) facilities in the schools are varied. The schools located in the center of the city and having good financial capacity generally have good IT facilities. However, totally different situation is found among the schools located outside the center of the city. The IT facilities within these schools are relatively poor and the Internet is not optimized because it is not supported by good connection. In addition, the students of these schools relatively have simple life and, therefore, the researcher found that many of them did not have any laptops. Therefore, these schools should be creative in designing the programs of character education by minimizing the information technology intervention.

There are also other obstacles within the implementation of character education in terms of teachers. Many teachers still complain of difficulties in determining the appropriate teaching and learning methods and strategies. These teachers perceived that they should be provided with many training or tutorial programs in order to improve their creativity in designing the teaching and

learning process. In addition to the teaching and learning process-related problems, the aspects of assessment become another problem that these teachers complain of. The design of assessment instrument is one of the matters that the teachers often complain of. They perceive that they cannot master the design of character education instrument and, as a consequence, they are still doubtful about the results of their assessment. They also have difficulties in determining the appropriate assessment technique. They often complain of the difficulties in selecting the appropriate assessment technique so that they can assess many students under a valid manner.

Another obstacle that the researcher found in terms of students is the students' heterogeneity. The students are heterogeneous based on their environmental and familial background. They have experienced their life for more than 15 years and, therefore, each of them has peculiar attitudes. Within the implementation of character education, this factor becomes a huge obstacle because managing hundreds of students with their respective fundamental characters is relatively difficult. If the character development is conducted in a forced manner, then characters would have only been applied within the schools.

The last obstacle is the society's paradigm that still considers schooling as an activity of improving the students' cognition. It is still commonly found that the high daily test scores have earned higher prices than the honesty in taking the daily test. One of the parties which still clings to such a paradigm is the parents. Therefore, the schools should be able to provide the right paradigm that schooling is a process of being a better person in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Such an understanding might underlie the positive synergy between the schools and the parents in implementing character education.

### **Discussions**

In Indonesia, character education is formulated in Curriculum 2013; as a result, the implementation of Curriculum 2013 automatically brings about the implementation of character education within the educational process. The results of the implementation of character education shows that there is an improvement in the 18 characters contained in Curriculum 2013. Such character improvement is caused by the fact that Curriculum 2013 demands the scientific approach and other approaches such as problem-based learning within the learning process. The scientific and the

problem-based learning (PBL) approach demand the application of student-centered learning process so that the students become more active in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects; as a result, such an approach provided positive impacts on the improvement of students' characters. This situation is in with the opinion of Arofah (2015), Wardani (2014) and Jailani & Retnawati (2016) and Apino & Retnawati (2017) which suggest that the implementation of PBL method within the learning process might exercise the students' characters. In addition, the presence of student-centered learning activities makes the students have active discussions and mutual opinion sharing activities. The student-centered learning process is one of the pillars in the cooperative learning process. In other words, the cooperative learning process contributing positively contribution toward the development of students' characters. This finding is definitely in accordance with the opinion of Matchett (2009) and Zakaria, Chin & Daud (2010).

Although character education in Indonesia can contribute positively to the improvement of students' characters, the researcher still found several obstacles within its implementation. The main problem found in the implementation of the character education is related to the teacher's capacity, the parent's and the society's paradigm, and the facilities. In accordance with the opinion of Lee (2009) and Almerico (2014), the obstacle within the implementation of character education is related to the teacher's capacity, which is caused by the teacher's difficulties in integrating character education into the teaching and learning process within the classroom. Then, the obstacle within the implementation of character education related to the parent's and the society's paradigm is the misconception that the learning process within the school is focused solely on the intellectual development. Such a paradigm certainly causes the parents to be unwilling to take active participation in character education, whereas one of the factors that determines the successful implementation of character education is the synergy between the schools and the parents. This finding is in accordance with the opinion of Lee (2009) which suggests that within the development of character education there are parents who are still unwilling to take part in the process of character education. In addition, still in accordance with the opinion of Lee (2009), such a paradigm also causes the students to have huge academic pressures because they are demanded to solely focus on the achievement of cognitive learning results. On the other hand, in relation to the facilities, the main problem is that the educational facilities are not sufficient and well-distributed. This situation certainly leads to the difficulty in maintaining the process of character education

continuously (Lee, 2009). This situation is also in accordance with the opinion of Almerico (2004) which suggests that one of the obstacles in implementing character education is the provision of learning facilities such as the provision of necessary curriculum materials.

Various efforts can be made to overcome obstacles in the implementation of education in general, and character education in particular. Improving teachers' quality is the key word to solve the problem. This effort can be undertaken by implementing the various training required by the teacher to support the implementation of the applied curriculum (Retnawati, Munadi, Arlinwibowo, Wulandari, 2017; Retnawati, Arlinwibowo, Wulandari, Pradani, 2018; Retnawati, Djidu, Apino, Kartianom, Anazifa, 2018), including training on the implementation of character education. The socialization of character education programs also need to be done to parents and society. As well as in the implementation of teaching and learning in every subject in the school that requires a certain learning trajectory (Retnawati, 2017), the values in character education to be trained and strengthened need to be ordered in a particular path or values learning trajectory. Of course, the evaluation of socialization efforts of character education programs, values learning trajectory that needs to be followed, and impact of character education are required further researches.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Based on the findings, the strategies that the senior and vocational high schools might implement within the implementation of character education include: (1) preparing many supporting facilities; and (2) designing character development programs that encompass all elements, namely the teachers, employees, students and, even parents/foster parents. The objectives of implementing these strategies are to understand and to implement the intention of character education within the daily life and to have positive synergy among all elements. The schools implement character education by providing role model, intervention, habituation and reinforcement. The process of such implementation has been the results of the synergy among all school community members, society, and parents. The efforts that the schools pursue in implementing character education of Curriculum 2013 provide positive impacts on the development of students' characters. In general, the obstacles that the schools have within the implementation of character education are related to the students' heterogeneity and the society's paradigm which suggests that the focus of schooling



has only been in the cognitive development; on the other hand, other schools have the obstacles that are related to the provision of learning facilities.

One of the main factors that support the successful implementation of character education in senior and vocational high schools in Indonesia is the availability of sufficient learning facilities. However, the facts show that not all senior and vocational high schools in Indonesia have such sufficient learning facilities. Therefore, the Indonesian government as the party that is responsible for providing the learning facilities is expected to pay more attention to the availability and the equal distribution of educational facilities. Furthermore, schools should have more synergy with the society and students' parents in implementing character education. Character education has been a common responsibility and, therefore, the responsibility in implementing character education should not be assigned solely the schools. In relation to the future research, regarding the differences among students' characteristics in each school level, there should be another study that can investigate the strategy and the implementation of character education in elementary schools.

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