THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER EDUCATION: THE ENGLISH TEACHER’S EFFORTS AND CHALLENGES IN STUDENTS’ CHARACTER BUILDING

Hendra Heriansyah
Department of English Education, Syiah Kuala University, Indonesia
Email: hendrisa@unsyiah.ac.id

Abstract
A good teaching objective should not only accentuate the attainment of theoretical and practical knowledge, but also provide a meaningful learning outcome and positive change of students’ attitude and behaviour. As one of key components within teaching and learning process at school, a teacher definitely plays central roles and contributions to successfully achieve this desired goal. This can be done through a school program and pedagogical practice which promote sets of character values during the classroom instruction and its influences can be seen in daily interaction between teacher and students as well other components in a school environment. Thus, a variety of efforts are needed to achieve this purpose. This paper addresses the importance of character education for school learners and the discussion is mainly focused on the efforts that can be made by English teachers in students’ character building. There are several efforts that can be made by teachers to teach character education for students including teaching a direct example, giving an assignment, cultivating a habitual action, and being a role model. In addition, this paper also discusses several challenges which are likely to be confronted by teachers in the field such as commitment, support, and appreciation.

Keywords: Character Education, Teacher’s Efforts, Challenges, English Teacher

INTRODUCTION
On September 6, 2017, Indonesian President Joko Widodo issued the Presidential Regulation No. 87/2017 about character education values reinforcement such as discipline, tolerance, honesty, curiosity, responsibility, and so forth. It aims at strengthening students’ character through the harmony of knowledge, attitude, feeling, and skill in order to build and equip Indonesian students as gold generation in 2045. This regulation, of course, becomes a basic guideline for ministry education and culture as well as educational units in designing a curriculum that has meticulous content, process, and assessment as stated on the objective of this regulation. The existence of educational institution, generally, which in terms of this is a school has a responsibility toward the development of students’ character because half of students’ time is spent at school. The time that they spend are not only for learning but also it is used for interacting with other members of school community such as friends, teachers or school staff, who may have various distinctive backgrounds, languages and cultures. From this social interaction either in the classroom or in school environment, it is expected will evolve positive values which lead to students’ character development.

Apart from school, the existence of a teacher in particular as one of components in the success of a learning outcome is quite important also because he/she significantly holds a central role in teaching moral values to his/her students. It is also a challenge
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for a teacher how to array a lesson plan which embeds a set of character values and implement it in the classroom. In other words, character education values have become the essential part within each stage of teaching and learning process. Thus, it is needed a good partnership collaboration between school and teacher in developing students’ character. It can be done through a great deal of programs, activities, or efforts in order to meet the mandatory of the law.

Pertaining to character and character education, some questions that may arise are what is meant with the character? why does the character importantly become a problematic matter in educational context? What is the character education?; what efforts can be undertaken by the teacher who refers to the English teacher in this context in students’ character building?; what challenges may be encountered by the teacher in its implementation in the field? To discuss aforementioned the queries, this paper falls into three parts, which the first part provides a concise explanation about importance of character and character education. The second part explicates the attempts that can be done by the English teacher in teaching character values including the defiance which may arise due to its practices. The third part draws a conclusion from the discussion.

DISCUSSION

Before we furthermore discuss the importance of character education that relates to students’ character building, the following part will be presented some reasons why the character substantially becomes a baffling matter especially in educational context. The first, there is a growing assumption that educational institutions more prioritize learning achievement on product-oriented. In terms of this, Elfindri et al. (2010) pose a question whether education is only an outcome-oriented process; or it also results behaviour’s changes. From this question indicates that educational institutions have neglected affective aspect which is actually also a vital domain in a teaching and learning process. In other words, educational institutions have definitely unsucceeded teach moral values to students since the learning outcome is more emphasized on both cognitive and psychomotor aspect as the main priority in learning achievement. Although, from previous research studies obviously indicated that students’ academic achievement/success is not always correlated to their emotional intelligence.

For instance, a study carried out by Lawrence and Deepa (2013) revealed that there were no significant difference between emotional intelligence and academic achievement of high school students. Another investigation conducted by Moreno (2017) also found that emotional intelligence was not considered predictive to academic achievement among children. From these research can be concluded that a school learner or a college student might have academically succeeded after he/she is graduated from school or university; but he/she has poor emotional intelligence when facing various problems in the real life. Perhaps, someone couldn’t work together in a team, for example, because he/she feels knows everything; so, it is not necessary to listen any suggestions from other team members. As a result, it is difficult for him/her to communicate with other people.

The second, moral degradation that yet occurs in diverse areas including on educational sector becomes one of the prime reasons why a good character is really required in the current globalization era. Relating to this, Harris, the dean of
undergraduate education of Harvard University (cited in Perez-Pena, 2012) said that Harvad students considered cheating was a tolerable thing. He (ibid) noted nearly half of undergraduate students suspected cheating for working together or for plagiarizing on a take-home final exam. Meanwhile, a survey conducted by the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) for more than 71,000 students found that about 68 percent of students admitted to cheating at least once (Musto, 2017). While, a study carried out by Anderman (cited in Musto, 2017), chair of the Department of Educational Studies at the Ohio State University, for 400 American students from two universities, concluded that cheating is a common thing among students. Meanwhile, Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) did a quick investigation to a lecturer who suspected leaking the questions of an exam (www.channelnewsasia.com, 2018).

From the above cases virtually appear that educational world is seriously experiencing a moral crisis among school learners and university students as they have ignored such rudiment values which build their personality character as academic honesty, integrity, hard work, and so forth.

The third, the reason the character becomes problematic has to do with the rapid technology development and sophisticated digital information do not always bring positive impacts on students’ character growth. Regarding this matter, Daud (2013, p.85) contends that if the use of information technology and communication, for instance internet, is not well controlled; so it will will bring negative influences; although it also has positive impacts particularly on academic culture. Moreover, Wright (2011) states that there are potential problems that emerge through the use of technology; and it affects students’ character. Daud and Wring’s standpoint could be true because not all people appropriately use the technology. Some use it to spread hoax or hate speech, do cyberbullying or offer the prohibited drugs, etc. That is why we including students should wisely utilize the technology. Nonetheless, the presence of modern technology and other online applications are unavoidable because people use them for various different purposes.

So far we have talked about why the character becomes a crucial matter in particularly educational context. The following part will be adduced what is meant with the character education in order to give us a better understanding. The definition of this notion may vary according to educational experts, practitioners, observers, and psychologists. According to Samani and Hariyanto (2011) character education is the positive things done by a teacher and affect his/her students’ character. This means that any good deeds which the teacher does will influence students’ attitude and behaviour. While, Winton (2008) affirms that character education is the deliberate effort by schools to teach values to students. Similarly, Lickona (2004) asserts that character education is an effort deliberately designed to improve students’ character. From the standpoints of Samani and Hariyanto, Winton as well as Lickona explicitly show that teaching character values is not solely the responsibility of a school; but also it is needed the conscious efforts from a teacher to teach the values for students’ character improvement.

In relation to character education, as mentioned on previous explanation that the English teacher also has a central role in shaping students’ character apart from the role of parents. The next question is why the English teacher needs to engage in developing
character values to his/her students. The answer to this question is because the development of students’ character is not only the main task of a religious or counseling teacher; but also each teacher including an English teacher also has the same responsibility in students’ character building. The English teacher, thus, needs to profoundly endeavour how today’s students are molded with personal traits in order to be a good citizen in the future. The following elaboration will be focused on some efforts that can be done by the English teacher in relation to students’ character building.

Teaching a Direct Example
Teaching by a direct example is one of attempts which can be undertaken by the teacher to establish students’ character; because the matter of character is not only about learning a number of theories; but it needs to be practiced in a concrete action. In terms of this, Lickona (2004, cited in Wamaungo & Zein, 2012, p.144) argues that if we want to teach a character, we have to present the character. Moreover, teaching by a direct example is intended to form conscience and behaviour of students. For instance, the teacher and students pray together before starting the lesson. Another instance is the teacher prays for students who do not come into the class because of being sick. And the other one is the teacher and students pray (i.e. zuhur praying) together at school. The character values that contain from several instances are religious, thanking, caring, loving, integrity, and togetherness.

Giving Assignments
To assign students for a particular task or ask them to do a small project is an effort that the teacher can do to build his/her students’ character. To achieve this purpose, the teacher needs to apply a variety of learning models which can develop the values of character. For this reason, Lickona (cited in Zubaedi, 2011, p.214-215) said that teaching by using cooperative learning model is very suitable for the character education because it enables the teacher is able to teach character values. For example, the teacher assigns students to discuss a particular topic or solve a problem/case. Another thing is the teacher can also ask students to do a project (i.e. a survey about the difficulties faced by students in learning English) and then report its results. Aside from this, the teacher could ask students individually to read a research report or a reading text and write a conclusion or summary from what they have read. From some these learning activities, the teacher indirectly teach students some character values namely cooperation, responsibility, respect, polite, critical thinking, honesty, self confidence, self direction, creative, logical thinking, loving knowledge, and discipline.

Cultivating a Habitual Action
To accustom an action in daily interaction at school is a part of character education learning. In lined with this, Irianto (2010, p.5) explains that the absolute character education doesn’t only educate about ‘right or wrong’, but it covers a habitual process about the good behaviour. Along with this, Lickona (1991) elucidates that our children and students need to know the good, desire the good, and do the good. He (ibid) adds that from this process will be molded habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of the action. The following examples are some efforts that can be done by the teacher in shaping his/her students’ character in school environment through habitual formation namely greeting students when coming into the class, throwing rubbish into
a garbage can, and not smoking either inside or outside of classroom. The values that want to be taught by the teacher by means these actions are hospitality, friendly, loving cleanness, caring environment and tolerance.

**Being a Role Model**

In this regard, Gunawan (2017) states that modeling is an effective way in teaching character to students at school. It is true because a teacher becomes a role model within everything for his/her students. The students will see and hear, and then imitate what the teacher says or does. That is why the teacher’s attitude and behaviour will impact on students’ character building. For example, the teacher always comes to school punctually. Another example is the teacher politely reprimands students who come late into the class. The last one is the teacher apologizes if he/she makes a mistake. The character values that comprise from these examples are discipline, trustworthy, polite, humility and honesty.

As part of this discussion, some challenges are presented that may be encountered by teachers including the English teacher in developing students’ character. The first, commitment becomes the prime challenge that will be faced by the English teacher in teaching the values to his/her students. It can be imagined if only few teachers who have responsibility for students’ character development; while, other teachers don’t have strong commitment to succeed this program; so, the character education program will not smoothly run. The second, support from various parties including school community and students’ parents is very necessary to build students’ character. Without full support particularly from school environment, it will be difficult for the English teacher to contribute in this program. The last thing relates to appreciation. For the English teacher who has endeavoured to teach character values and implement them in the real example/action should be given a high appreciation. The appreciation could in the form of material or non material. Otherwise, he/she may become an apathetic teacher toward students’ character growth.

**CONCLUSION**

In order to response the current global market toward the demand of skilled graduates, both school and teacher should be aware of that cognitive ability does not always become the main consideration in applying for a job; but intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, and soft skills also become a considerable matter. Hence, integrating a set of values through a holistic approach within each stage of classroom learning is a must for a teacher including the English teacher in order to mold students with good character values. By having rigorous character the graduates are expected will be successful when confronting various challenges and changes because of survival of the fittest. In other words, the students are not equipped with hard skills, but other skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, working together must be trained from now because these are required in today’s world.

**REFERENCES**


