

## MAIN CHARACTERS IN CULTURE DEVELOPMENT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

This study aims at identifying and describing main characters in the efforts of developing school culture in 3 elementary schools in Sleman regency. The approach used in this study is qualitative. Data collection techniques are conducted through observation, focus group discussion, and interview. The subjects are School Principals and teachers. Each school has developed their own unique culture, as represented in: school visions and missions, school rules, school habits, environment, facilities and infrastructures, teaching and learning process, and other symbols representing schools' characters. There are actually many characters which are available to develop by each. The research results show that every school possesses their own main character in the efforts of developing school cultures. The main character that has been developed by SDN Percobaan 2 Depok Sleman is discipline. It is implemented through the values, activities, and symbols existed in school daily life. For examples, the teachers and students show their discipline at the classrooms. The main character that has been developed by SD Muhammadiyah Condong Catur Depok Sleman is noble character. It is developed through character exemplary and habituation, especially through religious activities such as doing prayer. The main character of SD Kanisius Kadirojo is affection. The implementation of the character includes affection to God, fellows, and environment. As the implication, SD Kanisius Kadirojo becomes one of schools with good environmental awareness or adiwiyata school in Sleman regency.

Key words: main character, school culture development

### Introduction

Regarding the increasing of public demand for quality education and services, schools have increasing challenges as well. Schools are believed as the institutions which become the arena of developing any potentials and the multiple intelligencies of the students. Thus the efforts of improving the quality, it is necessary to take the efforts as embedded actions represented in any school changes. Schools function as the media of social and cultural transmission (Sairin, 2003:8). Schools are involved as one of social institution influencing the socialization process and hand on cultures to the students. Schools are social systems that involved the unique organization and the social relation among the members that are so called school cultures. To realize the schools which can cooperate with others.

A school culture is defined as a complex set of beliefs, values and traditions, ways of thinking and behaving that make different characteristics from other institutions (Vembriarto, 1993:82). It has the essential elements, such as:

1. Location, environment, infrastructure, school buildings, furniture, and so on.
2. School curriculum that contain ideas or facts become the whole education program.
3. Teachers, students, non-teaching specialists, and administrators.
4. Moral values, rules of conducts, and the school life climate.

Each school has its own unique cultures. Each has rules of conducts, customs, ceremonies, school

hymns, uniforms and emblems that characterize the schools. The studies of school culture show that the cultures influence the process and students' learning styles. As a proverb says that "children learn not what is taught, but what is caught."

There are some definitions proposed about the school culture. Deal & Peterson (2011) state that:

*"School culture is the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the persona of the school. These unwritten expectations build up over time as teachers, administrators, parents, and students work together, solve problems, deal with challenges and, at times, cope with failures. For examples, every school has a set of expectations about what can be discussed at staff meetings, what constitutes good teaching techniques, how willing the staff is to change, and the importance of staff development. School culture is also the way they think their schools and deal with the culture in which they work."* (Deal & Peterson, 2011)

The school culture is a set of norms, values, beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, symbols, and stories that forming the school appeal. It states hopes to be better from time to time as the teachers, administrators, parents, and students. They work together to face any problems, challenges, and failures. Each school has a set of hopes that include: the materials of the staff meetings, how to teach well, and the importance of staff development. The school culture also becomes the way of life of the school and its elements.

According to Schein (in Peterson, 2002), a school culture can be defined as follows:

*"School cultures are complex webs of traditions and rituals that have been built up over time as teachers, students, parents, and administrators work together and deal with crises and accomplishments. Cultural patterns are highly enduring, have a powerful impact on performance, and shape the essays people think, act, and feel." (Schein, Deal & Peterson, 2002)*

The school culture is a set of complex network of traditions and rituals built by the teachers, the students, parents, and administrators. It influences their work performance, the way they think, act, and feel.

Deal and Peterson (1999) expand the study of the school culture. It affects how the school functions well. The aspects of school cultures that can affect the function of the school are presented as follows:

#### 1. *Vision and Values*

Kouzes and Posner (Locke, et.al. 1991) define a vision as *an ideal and unique image of the future*". Hickman & Silva describe it as *a mental journey from the known to the unknown, creating the future from a montage of current facts, hopes, dreams, dangers, and opportunities*".

According to the definition, a vision is an ideal and unique image of the future or the future orientation of the ideal state.

A value, from sociological/anthropological view, can be described as:

*"A values is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of a desirable which influence the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action." (Kluckhohn dalam Enz, 1986)*

A value is not just a preference, but a compound of thoughts, feelings, and preferences. According to Parsons and Shils (Enz, 1986), components of value include: cognitive, emotional, and evaluative. Meanwhile, according to Harrison and Huntington (2000), there are two categories of value, namely the intrinsic value and instrumental value. The intrinsic value is the value that is enforced regardless of the profit/loss, for example: the value of patriotism. While the instrumental value is the value that is supported as beneficial, such as productivity. Visions, missions, goals, and cultural values are important elements. The importance of meaningful goals, positive norms and firm values encourages the vigor and vitality to school improvement.

#### 2. *Ritual and Ceremony*

Ceremonies, traditions, and school celebration are beneficial to create informal networks which are relevant with cultures. Important events of the schools can be celebrated in simple way to recharge esprit de corps of the school.

#### 3. *History and Stories*

History and past events are worth to transfer cultural energy. The school culture focuses on keeping the stream of the history and past events to construct recent school cultures. In other words, the romance of the past can evoke the spirit to realize the future glories.

#### 4. *Architecture and Artifact*

Schools usually have symbols such as: architecture, motto, words, and actions. Each school has the emblems/school logos, mottos, songs (march/early hymn), and school uniforms that reflect the vision and mission of the school. Land use in the school, such as: classroom walls, and a school hall for physical artifacts, is effective in growing the value and spirit of the school, for example through posters, wall magazine, banners, and other inspirational messages.

The attitudes which are internalized by the student (the attitude of learning, the attitude toward authority, and the attitude toward values) are not derived from the formal school curriculum, but from the school culture. Research by J. Coleman on a number of secondary schools in the United States showed that students in these schools had big appreciation to sport achievements, extra-curricular activities, and popularity rather than academic achievement. Similarly, research conducted by Wilson at several secondary schools showed that school ethos is something affecting academic achievement and aspirations of the students about their works. (Vembriarto, 1993: 82).

Along the way, the school also has communal customs and ceremonies to celebrate success, to provide an opportunity for collective transition, and to recognize the contribution to the school community. School culture also includes symbols and stories that communicate core values, reinforce the mission, build commitment, and a sense of togetherness. The symbol is an outward sign of the value. The story is a representation of the history and meaning of the group. In positive cultures, these features reinforce the learning process, commitment, and motivation, as it ensures the consistency of the members of the school's vision.

According to Peterson (2002), a school culture influences the way people think, feel, and act. Able to understand and establish a culture of a school are the keys to success in promoting staff and student learning. Meanwhile, according to Willard Waller (Deal & Peterson, 2011), schools have a culture that is definitely about themselves. At

school, there is a complex ritual in interpersonal relationships, a set of customs, mores, irrational sanctions, and moral codes applied among them. Parents, teachers, principals, and students always feel undefined feelings about their school and about something very powerful. This fact is often being the overlooked aspect of the school and is often not present in the discussions about school improvement efforts.

Education system develops certain patterns of behavior in accordance with what is expected by the community of the students. Life in schools as well as the norms can be referred as a school cultures. Although the school cultures is a part of the public cultures, but it has distinctive characteristics as a subculture (Nasution, 1999: 64). Schools have a duty to convey the cultures to a new generation and therefore they have to pay attention to the community and the general cultures. However, each school has certain behavior patterns. This may be caused by the assumption that schools have a position that is somewhat separated from the general flow of cultures.

The school subcultures can be occurred by the range of time of the students separated from the adult life. In this situation, it is possible to develop the special pattern of behavior of youth which can be seen through their clothes, language, habit, and activities. Another cause of the onset of the school culture is the typical task of educating school children by giving a number of the knowledge, attitudes, skills that fit the curriculum to the specific control methods and techniques applied at the school. In implementing the curriculum and extra-curriculum, there is a development of the pattern of behavior that is typical for different schools to the other groups in society (Nasution, 1999: 65-66). Each culture contains certain forms of behavior from all students and teachers. That is the norm for every student and teacher. This norm is evident in the behavior of children and teachers, the school regulations, the actions and penalties for violations, as well as in a variety of activities such as ceremonies.

Specific task of school is to educate students by providing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills appropriate to the curriculum with specific control methods and techniques applied in the school. The development of some behavior patterns of the schools is different from one school to the others. The norm is a form of student and teacher behavior. Although the elements of culture present in all schools, but each school has its own culture that is unique, distinctive, and different from other schools.

The school culture has implications to the school improvement, as stated by Deal & Peterson (2011). However, it is practically ignored.

1. *Culture fosters school effectiveness and productivity*

Teachers are able to succeed the positive cultures such as productivity, performance, and the improvement efforts. The cultures help the teachers to overcome any

vagueness of their works by focusing on collegiality. It is important to socially motivate them in conducting their works to teach thirty students in the classroom. Culture of encouraging, sanctioning, and rewarding the professional duty can improve their skills.

2. *Culture improves collegial and collaborative activities that foster better communication and problem solving practices*

It is essential to develop the culture of collegiality and collaboration. It creates good environment to share social ideas and professional, to share effective practices, and to overcome the problems.

3. *Culture fosters successful change and improvement efforts*

The toxic culture supports the mediocrity and apathy, which is not likely to encourage innovation. In contrast, the schools that support innovation, the staff motivates to make experiments and take the risks by using new approaches to solve the problems and to strengthen the vision of the school improvement. The school cultures reinforce the better quality of the teaching and learning process as well as creating conducive environment to make some changes in aiming the goals.

4. *Culture builds commitment and identification of staff, students, and administrators*

People are motivated to be commitment in an organization that gives them meanings, values, and has the goals to make a better situation. Commitment grows as the social culture develops. They maintain the mission as well as run the traditions, rituals, and ceremonies that become their identity.

5. *Culture amplifies the energy, motivation, and vitality of a school staff, students, and community*

The socio-culture climate influences the emotional orientation and the psychology of the staff. In some cases, the school that has optimistic spirits is able to create the positive, spritful, respectful, and supporting environment. Otherwise, the school will create the negative and unproductive socio-culture environment.

6. *Culture increases the focus of daily behavior and attention on what is important and valued*

Despite the rules, job-description, and policies can shape and influence the person's behavior, but the unwritten rules and customs and traditions in everyday life, it is often more meaningful in encouraging ongoing activities and progress in school. Hidden assumptions are inherent in the pattern of more intensive culture. With strong values and meaningful ways, daily work becomes more focused on important issues such

as: the quality of learning and teaching, and the accelerated learning for all students.

The school cultures have big impact to the school achievement, the changes, and the school improvement. They also influence the process of teaching and learning and the students' characters

### Research Method

This study used the qualitative approach. The setting was the elementary schools in Sleman regency. It was conducted in 2010. The criteria to determine the subjects were based on the research goals. The elementary schools that had been the subjects of the study including the public and the private elementary schools in Sleman. The heterogeneity of the schools is the key to explore the universal aspects of the school cultures of each school. The techniques of collecting the data were observation, focus group discussion (FGD) and interviews.

Information needed was gained from the School Principals and the teachers of the schools. They gave information about the main characters developed in the schools. The data collected were analysed through descriptive analysis. The analysis steps were: simplifying, clarifying, focusing, organizing, in systematic and logical ways as well as making the abstract of the conclusion of the analysis. It followed the steps from Miles and Hubberman (Sudarsono, 2004:17).

### Research Result and Discussion

The Description of the Main Characters of Three Elementary Schools

#### *Discipline in SDN Percobaan 2 Depok*

The students get equal rights from the school whether inside or outside the classroom. The school makes habituation and modelling of well-behaving in social life and the habituation of doing prayers. The students also have duty to abide the rules. However, the teachers cannot intimidate the students. The professional teachers always go with the students in fun teaching and learning process.

The school pays attention to the students' safety. After school, the students have to wait their parents picking them up. The parents are able to contact the school or even the Principal. To make conducive environment, the school makes agreement and teamwork with the parents. The intimacy and the harmony between the school and the parents give a positive impact to the development of the students. The main character of the school is discipline. It is reflected through the values, activities, and symbols implemented in the teaching-learning process, inside or outside the classrooms.

Noble Character in SD Muhammadiyah Condong Catur

The students have equal rights to get knowledge, affection, religious values, tranquility and comfort at school. Moreover, they have duty to obey the teachers and to be discipline in doing prayers, following the rules and the school activities. For the students' safety, the students are not allowed to go outside without the security control. The school makes the school environment comfortable and provides the right actions according to the students' needs. All things happen at the school is under the school responsibility. The school uses conscience approach to get the students' attention. The unwritten rules are conveyed to the parents through advice.

The students' safety is the responsibility of all school elements. All takes active actions to maintain their safety. There is a regular meeting conducted once a week among the principal, the teachers, and the parents.

#### Affection in SD Kanisius Kadirojo

The students get equal rights to have proper portion of teaching-learning process, based on the curriculum. They have managed their time whether joining the class or extracurricular activities at school. The main duty of the students is studying, obeying the rules of the school, participating regular ceremony, and praying together. All elements look after each other, take responsive actions, have regular meetings among the principal, the teachers, and the parents to discuss the current issues going on at the school. The teachers need to pay their attention to the students as well.

The school also keeps in touch with the parents through friendly communication and giving equal services to them. While break time, the teachers in turn look after the students. The students are free to 'move' so they feel happy and safe. There is a canteen where the parents put their foods there in order to serve meals for the students. Each class has been facilitated by drink spots. Instead of conducting teaching-learning activities in the classrooms, the school provides extracurricular activities, such as: little doctors/physicians and school safety patrol. There are written instruction and rules for the students and the parents. The uniform unites them. The key success of the school cultures is the active participation of the teachers, the parents, the staff, the school guardian, and people around the schools. They have equal dignity and care each other.

### Conclusion

There are several characters can be developed by each school. The result of the study shows that one school has its own main character in fostering school cultures. Some of the main characters are discipline, noble character, and affection. Those characters are manifested in the form of values, activities, and symbols that can be found daily in

schools. Although the elements of the school cultures exist in all schools, but, actually, each school has its uniqueness and special characteristics that make one school different from other school. School cultures take the important role to determine the color of schools, including to influence the way of the students think, act, and their motivation in following learning process in schools.

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