



## Research Article

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# Beyond School Reach: Character Education in Three Schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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### Abstract

*The ability of Indonesian schools related to the character education of students is still far from the expectations and mandate of the law. Based on the qualitative research conducted in the three schools in Indonesia, the current study shows that the educational process only introduce students to the standardized concepts with no involvement in social process and practices, which will give them experience and opportunities to adopt the character values. The school curriculum only forms the ideal type of character, does not stimulate the active involvement of students in the community. Students only learn the character, based on dominant values constrained by the state, i.e.: having loyalty, defending the country, and loving homeland. In addition to narrowing the character space values to the interests of the state, the character education also does not accommodate the wealth of ethnic and religious cultures in Indonesia. This paper proposes the need for changes in school autonomy from an extension of the government, leading to provision of a conducive climate for the emergence of various approaches to improve character education. Character education stems from differences in school ideology and Indonesian cultural diversity. The education system should release itself from the text orientation to better fit in with the dynamic cultural context as a source of character learning.*

**Keywords:** Character Education, School Autonomy, Good Citizenship, Cultural Diversity, Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

There is an urgent necessity for character improvement for education due to the increase of moral crisis among adolescents between 10-24 years old, constituting to circa 26.67% of the total population. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (*KPAI*) discovered that between 2011 to 2016, there were 7,698 crime cases of child perpetrators. These cases included physical, psychological, sexual violence, murder, theft, traffic accidents, weapons ownership, kidnapping, and abortion. The legal, social, and religious norms are considered the primary factors to a crisis of civilization that can gradually destroy morality (Cahyadi, 2014; Hadisi, 2015). Similarly, the data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health in 2017, declared approximately 3.8% of school and college students have misused narcotics and dangerous drugs. UNICEF estimated that violence among adolescents in Indonesia have reached 50% or more in 2016.

The field of education serves as a primary aspect in developing character, however it is challenged by negative behavior among adolescents. Data from all 33 provinces of Indonesia illustrate that 63% of adolescents are involved in premarital sex, with 21% of young women having abortions ([www.bkkbn.go.id](http://www.bkkbn.go.id)). The moral crisis among young people is significantly alarming considering the fact that they have to become good citizens in the framework of civic engagement (Sherrod et al., 2010; Tan et al., 2014). A school has a strategic position in character education and considered as the most responsible institution for adolescent morality (Ilma, 2015; Sudrajat, 2011; Sukitman, 2012; Supranoto, 2015; Sutyitno, 2012). The ability of schools in carrying out this mandate however, needs to be investigated.

The evaluation of school performance indicates that the role of educational institutions in character building has not been optimal (Sutyitno, 2012; Sutyiono, 2015), as evidenced from the increasing number of teenagers who break the law. Schools have made efforts and brought reforms for the character development of teenagers, although it does not seem to bring any significant changes (Chang et al., 2014). Experts evaluate that the educational process has failed to produce good citizens due to an institutional focus on only achieving cognitive results (Sutyitno, 2012). The curriculum also highlights the weaknesses of educational institutions as it is limited to only introducing character concepts (Sutyiono, 2015) rather than directly involving teenagers in social processes. This tendency is considered to be the basis of schools' failure to carry out character education.

Further analysis, in line with the perspectives mentioned above, is required to find out why educational institutions in Indonesia are experiencing obstacles in character building. This paper therefore aims to examine how the mission and orientation of character education is carried out in schools. The discussion is focused on three domains: the conceptions and definitions of character in the curriculum, the pattern of character education in public versus private schools, and students' objectification in education.

Researchers argue that schools in Indonesia are still poor in character building, as their education process only involves knowledge learning in lieu of attitude and behavior development. The values and norms related to the spirit of the nation and state are subsequently not internalized by students. This paper presents the notion that character education orientation is still a basic attempt to teach students adherence to the state and religion so that they can be a part of an active civil society (Tan et al., 2017). The educational institutes do not properly implement character education. In this regard, the curriculum is not responsive and contextual with the need to realize the importance of an active civil society, as expected in a democratic country. The proof of this assumption forms the basis of the following discussion.

## 2. Debates on Character Education in Indonesia

Educational experts in Indonesia have various opinions regarding the direction of character education. First, some researchers believe that it is an effort to build noble values among students that reflect national identity (Anwar, 2017; Hakim, 2015; Rachmah, 2013; Sukitman, 2012; Yunus, 2013). These values are considered to be adopted via religion and culture that grow within families and communities. Some ethical and moral values are presented in the Pancasila (Rachmah, 2013),

a few are partially stored in the form of manuscripts (Abidin, 1983; Pelua & Tarantang, 2018) and folktales or saga, spread throughout the archipelago (Soetantyo, 2013; Indarti, 2017). The values enclosed in these various forms are viewed as the sources that should be explored and implemented in society, however is often denied by the state (Abdullah, 2006).

Second, some experts emphasize the importance of schools instilling character education. It is believed that schools can carry out the mission of character education through the integration of values in lessons, self-development through extracurricular activities, and school management. Similar to that, Sokatch (2017) considers schools being a good place to teach the national character, and teachers are the right agents in transforming students into upstanding citizens. The limitation in the role of schools to carry out the transformational missions needs to be evaluated for their effectiveness in character building (Ilma, 2015; Kurniawan, 2015; Sumarno, 2011).

Third, researchers suggest that the effectiveness of character education in schools is largely determined by the teaching, modeling, reinforcing, and habituating processes by teaching staff (Sudrajat, 2011). Henceforth, all school components have an obligation to build a conducive school culture. The role of teachers and school administrators is very important in anticipating, identifying, and preventing the occurrence of inappropriate activities in schools (Waters and Mashburn, 2017). Teachers should inspire students to develop their morality and ensure the provision of opportunities grow ethically and in line with the values of the country, while school management should create a challenging academic environment that aid students in building character. Many problems can be overcome through the involvement of parties in schools, especially when identifying the importance of the democratization process (Fischman and Hass, 2012; Morris and Cogan, 2001) and mutual respect in society (Hammett and Staeheli, 2011). A few however, seem skeptical about the moral education taught in the school environment (Kristjansson, 2013). With regards to this, Johnson and Morris (2010) criticize the school education for prioritizing the political context rather than its sociocultural ones.

The experts shed light on character education through different aspects, covering a variety of topics. For instance, there is a heavy emphasis on the importance of the roles of character in their personal development. In other words, the personality of teachers, parents, or community leaders are responsible for the formation of character, as they are the role-models (Amini, 2010; Hadi, 2011; Maryatun, 2016). The behavior of prominent figures at the leadership level often inspire and serve as a reference to the country's values for the young population. This is evident from the fact that a party has the competence to change someone to be better in moral measures (Hadi, 2011). Maryatun (2016) suggest that the role of education includes sources of knowledge, while the role models serve as the mediators in changing someone. As said by Hanani, character education is a conscious effort of adults (parents and community leaders) to shape the character of children in order to take charge of their lives and build admirable qualities (Hanani, 2014). The leadership role needs to be considered because it has a very significant impact when neglected in character education (Benawa at al., 2017).

Furthermore, a teacher plays a vital role in building student character as they serve as the role models. Ki Hadjar Dewantara, a Javanese influential cultural observer created a slogan in this context: "*Ing Ngarso Sung Tulodo, Ing Madyo Mangun Karso, Tut Wuri Handayani*" (The one in front gave direction, the one in the middle was encouraging, and the one behind was driving). In addition to being professional, teachers should possess such a character that can affect their students in a positive manner. Between teacher and student must be a foundation of love, mutual trust, respect, and far from a strict authoritarian relationship. Students are not only objects, they are also a subject at the same time (Wardani, 2010). As the main performer in teaching at school, a teacher plays several roles in the teaching-learning process. As proposed by Adams and Decey, teachers play their part as the instructors, class leaders, mentors, environmental regulators, participants, expeditors, planners, supervisors, motivators, and counselors (Sauri, 2010).

Beyond the exemplary theme, observers underline the importance of religion and Indonesian noble values as a source of information for character education (Riyadi, 2017; Emosda, 2011; Harmawati et al., 2016; Kristanto, 2014; Mintargo & Ganap, 2014; Nugrahani, 2012; Nurgiyantoro, 2011; Rachmah, 2013; Sukitman, 2012; Sutyitno, 2012; Wagiran, 2012; Wahyudi, 2016; Yunus, 2013). Pancasila, for example, has been regarded as an important source of personality building

because it deals with pure values of soul and worship, resignation, sincerity, solidarity, love of knowledge, honesty, simplicity, patience, gratitude, and humbleness (Hanani, 2014). These values, as indicated by Inayatillah (2017), can also be found in lullaby songs that contain messages and moral advice to direct the development of character among children from an early age. Likewise, the puppet shows also illustrate values, reflected in the character, stories, and various other elements that confirm the existence and identity of the nation (Nurgiyantoro, 2011). Saripudin and Komalasari (2015) asserted that a good education through various media will be able to shape the character of adolescents. Character building can be done through defining life values, expected behavior, correcting wrong or deviant actions, as well as through the principle of reward and punishment.

The relationship between character and religion is emphasized in many studies, assuming that the lives of individuals, communities, and nations are always based on religious teachings and their respective beliefs (Abdullah, 2003; Abdullah et al., 2008; Khotidjah and Izzah, 2015). On the basis of these considerations, the values of character education must be derived from religion. The role of religious education, especially Islamic, is considered very strategic in forming student character (Darussalam, 2014; Suhra, 2013; Khotidjah and Izzah, 2015; Ainiyah, 2013; Rahmawati, 2016). The young generation must be equipped with faith and devotion to the Almighty God (Khotidjah and Izzah, 2015; Ainiyah, 2013). However, it is also significant that religion must be in line with human values in order to grow an open attitude towards differing religions and beliefs (Darussalam, 2014). Religious education essentially guides students to voluntarily binding themselves to the values of religious teachings. With it, students are expected to be moral and polite to their fellow human beings regardless of race, ethnicity, and religion. After all, they are also expected to be individuals who are responsible, capable, and highly dedicated to their nation and country (Puldri, 2017: 64).

In addition to the reform era, experts began to assess the need to emphasize character education through civic education and multiculturalism. One of the subjects that plays an important role in its development is Citizenship Education (Balasubramaniam, 2007; Blum, 2014; Davies et al., 2005; Suseela et al., 2012; Moon and Jeong-Woo, 2011; Mori and Davies, 2014; Mukherjee, 1983). This subject is able to explore the topic of patriotism and multicultural ideologies experienced by the younger generation. By learning citizenship education, they would be capable in accepting and welcoming *the other* into their communities (Lee and Misco, 2014).

Multicultural education also aids in understanding local, national and global citizenship as part of solidarity. It also helps in reducing extremism and ethnonational principles. At the same time, the cosmopolitan citizens face political challenges due to the strengthening of anti-democratic parties at the local level (Osler, 2011). Multicultural education will give rise to a harmonious society (Tan, 2008), equality, and social cohesion (Tan and Tan, 2014). It certainly gives importance to openness, as is also suggested by Veugelers:

*The increasing multicultural composition of society has also caused a stronger influence of international developments on local education, not only in subject contents, but also in the student populations. Many schools show an increased cultural diversity in student population and in the curriculum. A serious concern for teachers is the integration and continuation of the global citizenship content... (Veugelers, 2011:478).*

Although the theme of multiculturalism is an important element in character education (Suparlan, 2005; and Tilaar, 2007), it seems to be less appreciated in the school curriculum. Multicultural tendencies can be seen in areas such as ethnicity, culture, customs, religion, race, gender, social strata, and groups of political alliances that are very clearly inherent in Indonesian people. The presence of people from different ethical and cultural backgrounds is a reality that should be accepted as the national wealth of the Indonesian people. In the midst of many differences, the Indonesian people must live and socialize as a national entity in order to maintain national integration. The logical implication is that it is necessary to build an inclusive, varied, tolerant, and supporting attitude with love and peace (cf Branson, 1998; Liliwieri, 2005; and Anderson, 2008). Culture is built from the regional norms and customs that grow and develop in

each ethnicity. The diversity of cultures that develop in every ethnicity must be recognized and used as a foundation in education (Geertz, 1992). Education in the reform era needs to be formulated with a new vision to build Indonesian people and civil society, whose identity is based on the national culture (Tilaar, 1999).

Discussion of the pertinent literature suggests that Indonesian schools have previously carried out character education. The basis of its material is derived from the religious and cultural values as well as civic education and multiculturalism. These features of character education (except multiculturalism) has been implemented in the school curriculum and certainly shaped the personality of students. There is no critical study however, that identifies the weaknesses of character education in relation to substance and the educational processes.

### 3. Research Process

This research was conducted in three schools at an Indonesian cultural center, the city of Yogyakarta. The sample represent public schools (Yogyakarta State High School 3), private schools oriented towards nationalism and cultural values (Taman Madya High School), and private schools with religious affiliations (Muallimat High School). The Muallimat students chosen were all girls to ensure a balance in gender. The three schools are compared to identify the differences in the practice of character building among students.

Data collection was performed through observation, interviews, and analysis of secondary materials. The observation techniques are used to see how character education is practiced in both the teaching and learning process. It was therefore carried out in the classroom of schools during lessons to observe the patterns of classroom activities and student interaction. The researchers looked at the landscape of schools - for example, separate classes for male and female students. Consequently, the observations were carried out through ethnoscape regarding symbols used in school. In addition, various supporting systems to implement the nation's character education curriculum were also considered.

In-depth interviews with students and teachers were conducted to find out how character education is perceived by educators and translated into the school curriculum. Interview questions investigated how much teachers knew about character development, their ability to choose the right books and teaching materials, and their ability to teach moral character to students. The researchers also chose the Counseling Guidance (BK) and Civil Education teachers as informants as they were directly involved in the character formation discourse. Simultaneously, interviews with students were also conducted in a friendly manner to observe their attitudes and behavior.

Furthermore, textbooks and various documents were studied to acknowledge the central themes discussed in the book and classroom learning. The three schools used the curriculum set by the ministry of education and also applied the character indicators set by the ministry. Each school implemented the points of value in a varied manner in accordance with the orientation of the school.

### 4. The Character Education Patterns in Three Schools

The findings of this study are divided into two areas: the pattern of character education based on the role of school institutions, and the curriculum. It has been discussed that educational institutes play a vital role in shaping the character of students. The more organized the process of including social relations is, the more active students are in adopting character values. In this manner, they will demonstrate education in a participatory manner rather than compulsion. Moreover, the curriculum is an educational instrument presenting the role of teacher and learning material.

#### 4.1 Character Education at Yogyakarta State High School 3

Character education in Yogyakarta State High School 3 (SMAN 3) prioritizes the process of participatory education, as illustrated by the habits of the school community. For instance, classes begin by praying together and singing *Indonesia Raya* (Indonesian national anthem) as part of the

school's efforts to internalize religious and national values among the students. The religious studies are considered to be a part of character education to form a tolerant, and inclusive community. In practice, their students are indeed not extremist, as evident from the fact that it is not uncommon for Muslim students to take Christian studies and vice versa. There is a reduced difference in multiculturalism because schools are considered a space where children from various backgrounds gather. This openness was confirmed by a teacher, Martina:

*"From the beginning, students have been asked to make a statement letter, stamped and signed by their parents containing the religious lessons they will follow. The Muslim students participate in Christian studies and it is not a problem as long as it is in accordance with the statement they made. Once, there were some Muslim students who did not take part in Islamic studies because the Islamic religious teacher was strict in giving grades. Students of the Yogyakarta Public High School 3 are always realistic."*

Tolerance towards religion, ethnicity, race, and origin is very important, especially considering the ratio between those with majority identities to minorities. In this school, even "bergodo" custom events are formed, which showcase the cultural values from various ethnicities, reflecting the differences in the backgrounds of the students. A sense of solidarity and empathy among and between students and teachers is developed in various forms. For instance, if a school resident dies, the whole school join in on the funeral services without hesitation. Likewise, if students or teachers are sick, they are immediately visited as part of students' social care activities.

The school room is also used to communicate character values, such as honesty. The concept of honesty is emphasized in many ways, especially with examinations. The school has prepared an "honesty" bracelet worn by the students on their wrists during the exam. This bracelet must be kept as a symbol of student's responsibility to being honest. If there is any case of cheating, the bracelet will be taken so that everyone is aware of the status of that student. Additionally, this technique helps the supervisor pay more attention to students who do not wear bracelets. This kind of institutionalization is considered a way of forming student character.

In addition to honesty, discipline is also promoted by the school. Every student who comes in late is subject to sanctions at the authority of the *code of conduct* officer and vice chairman of student affairs. The guidance and counseling teachers (BK) are the most responsible people when it comes to discipline, as every violation is immediately submitted to the BK teacher. A counseling teacher stated:

*"Our obligation is to guide children to behave well in accordance with school norms. Often, children do not move up to the next grade, not because they are ignorant but because of at will attitude, for example, they just leave without asking for a permit or letter, so their values are diminished."*

All forms of guidance are wide open for children who want to change. They are asked to comply with the regulations and fulfill the academic obligations.

The culture of achievement is well-developed in this institute, which can be seen from the posters on the walls of the school lobby next to the vision and mission statements. The following words are part of the daily motto:

*"Excited  
Discipline & Order  
Confidence  
Let's read  
Let's practice  
Creative  
Never give up  
Always pray"*

To complement character education, this high school invites students to participate in reflecting on the state of Indonesia through a series of discussions. The teacher starts a discussion with a current issue and students conclude the results which are made and agreed upon together.

In addition to that, social activities by students are also needed to strengthen their character and social responsibility. Students also participate in a Qurban Safari program during Eid al-Adha, in which goat meat is given to school cleaners and other people in the community who cannot afford it. This is a way to encourage students to get to know their community and improve students' social responsibility. Moreover, fund raising events are organized to encourage students to contribute in socially diverse activities. A number of social service activities include Padmanaba Islamic Intensification Study, spiritual camp, and distribution of basic necessities packages. In addition, there is also a distribution of 1,000 packets of rice when celebrating a school birthday. Funds for the provision of social services are obtained from some percent of the profits of all events held by each division, both in the Student Council and the school.

The social institutions in Yogyakarta State High School 3 uphold the spirit of tolerance, confidence, and creativity. However, the cultural mentality still does not look strong enough to be a prominent and distinctive feature among their graduate students. This is because the school has not developed a proper road map to give strong appreciation to students who have ideal character traits.

#### 4.2 Character Education in Taman Siswa High School

*Taman Siswa* is an educational institution that was established to produce a young generation with a strong character. Therefore, Yogyakarta Pawiyatan Taman Siswa High School (SMA Tamsis) is an institution that instills a value orientation close to nationalism, religious insight, noble character, hard work, smart, skilled, quality, and achievement. These traits are inherited values from Ki Hajar Dewantara, who is the founder of the Taman Siswa College. They are in line with the 18 points of value mandated by Presidential Regulation No. 87. 2017.

The teaching and learning activities start with praying. It is a tradition of Taman Siswa High School, which is led by the students alternately under the guidance of the Civic Education (PKn) teacher. They do the prayer silently, which is a more acceptable method for all students having different religious backgrounds. The religious activities are always bringing major attention of the school. On religious holidays, all students irrespective of their religious background, will be involved in the organized activities. Although the majority of students are Muslim, it does not limit the involvement of students in celebrating any religious day. Likewise, the greeting that is used in schools is "*salam*" pronounced by students to each other when passing by. Moreover, if students meet the teacher, they say "*Salam, Sir*", which is in accordance with the commitment of Taman Siswa as a nationalist school.

The implementation of discipline is an important aspect in the Tamsis High School environment. Students will be subject to penalties for any disciplinary violations committed, while the violations committed by teachers often lead to softer penalties. In the case of late entry, a student will get punishment in the form of running around the school field four times, while for teachers who are also late, the penalty is only a warning from the school. The school also does not impose a reward system for students' or teachers' achievement. Therefore, there is no method of appreciation to motivate either students or teachers. Discipline is more directed as a preventive measure with the application of very limited penalties.

Regarding the independence of students, civil education teachers emphasized that students of Tamsis High School had practiced independence in the teaching-learning processes. In terms of subject matter, students can first access the material summaries and the presentations on the teacher's personal blog. The process which focuses on aspects of discussion among students therefore, is designed well. Independence is also emphasized in extracurricular activities, such as Scouting and the Student Council. In the Scout activities, a block system is implemented, without regular training but camping is done for 3-4 days after the midterm tests. Likewise, the school only guided the students for the Student Council activities. All the activities were carried out entirely by students without school intervention, enabling them to act as independent leaders.

Taman Siswa also promises exemplary educators as a reference for students to build their character. A teacher has to show his responsibility as an educator who masters the material. A teacher said, "as a teacher, I am also required to exhibit exemplary behavior for my students".

Moreover, the closeness to students is also a concern outside academics. On the contrary, the civics teacher provides a different atmosphere to students, as he explained an example to be discussed by students sharing their different perspectives. In contrast to civil education teachers, a counseling teacher deals with the aspects of mental education, school regulations, career services, and solving academic and non-academic problems faced by students.

Although it is strong in providing examples of strong and developed character, Taman Siswa School is still less sensitive in developing a reading culture among students. Their interest in reading is relatively low, which is observed through the atmosphere of the library which is often empty. As a result, the appeals to students to have a higher motivation in learning are obviously not effective. The appeal is in the form of a slogan motto to motivate students to work hard.

The point that was successfully instilled in this school was the formation of an inclusive and collegial school community. Schools have no barriers regarding gender, social class, and even ethnicity. Additionally, the composition of students is quite balanced in contrast to Yogyakarta and those from the outside, therefore, Indonesian is used as the daily language. In the local Javanese language lessons, students from outside Java are assisted in terms of learning as well as the value provided, as long as the student shows strong desire and motivation.

Regarding the Taman Siswa values, the school use a variety of techniques to instill it among their students. For instance, in the School Orientation Period (MOS) activities, the new students are provided with material related to philosophy to Taman Siswa songs. Students are also invited to visit the sites related to the history of Taman Siswa such as the Dewantara Kirti Griya Museum and the Wijaya Brata Cemetery. In addition, Taman Siswa students routinely make visits to orphanages and visit friends or teachers who are sick to show their concern.

#### 4.3 Character Education at the Mu'allimat High School of Muhammadiyah

The Mu'allimat High School of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta is one of the schools that has a vision and mission to create a school culture that is globally oriented, religious, skilled, and superior in the fields of Islam, science, technology, art, and culture.

Mu'allimat builds an Islamic-minded educational institution. Their students are therefore expected to be Muslims who obey the obligations of Islam. Students of this school tend to show discipline in performing prayer activities and following the school rules. For example, a student must obey the rules of wearing the uniform. If it is not in accordance with the regulations, they will be asked to change the uniform in a special room or the discipline room. Moreover, students are punctual, no female students were late because they had been trained by the *musyirifah* (leaders) and *pamong* (guardian) who guarded the dormitory. The school gate is also closely monitored by security personnel. Every day, 5-minute literacy activities followed by *tadarus* (Al-Qur'an together reading) are carried out at the beginning of the lesson. The midday prayer (*dhuhr*) time is the same as the second break bell after which the students immediately leave the class. Some of them go to the mosque, while others returned to the dormitory to perform their prayer. Only a few students prayed at the mosque, located 30 meters from their classrooms. In addition to the dhuhr prayer, all students in Mu'allimat are required to take part in the congregational prayers and are given sanctions if they do not. The sanction is in the form of additional violation points.

To overcome the cheating practice in the midterm and final exam (called PAT, Final Assessment in Mu'allimat), the school uses their own technique in managing seating positions. *Aliyah* (High School) and *Tsanawiyah* (Junior High School) level students were seated side by side, meaning that even though they were sitting closely, the possibility of cheating was very small due to the difference in testing. In addition, the school also developed rules of conduct when working on exam questions. If anyone is found to be involved in cheating, they will be asked to leave the exam room immediately. The offenders will get violation points that can affect the value of their personality - this personality value can also influence a student's overall academic score.

In practicing the attribute of independence, Mu'allimaat have *hizbul waton*, which is an obligatory extracurricular activity for each student. This activity is in the form of routine exercises, such as general scouting activities. Before the new school year begins, the socialization of *Muhammadiyah* values is carried out and tested comprehensively at the end of class 6 (grade 12).



Additionally, the intra-school organizations are also affiliated with Muhammadiyah, where there is a Students Council called *Ikatan Pelajar Muhammadiyah (IPM)*. In the activity of selecting the administrators for Students Council, students and teachers are involved. They listen to the speeches of the potential candidates and then participate in the voting process to elect one. In an interview with a civil education teacher, it was said that the school also supervised the management of the organization starting from the socialization of candidates, speeches, and the election process. Mrs. Rina also admitted that the organization process was quite critical. Besides, it is not surprising to see the label "Prospective Islamic Woman Leader School" attached to Mu'allimat High School as the school strongly promotes Islamic culture and values. Therefore, the school does not provide ample open space for a critical attitude to grow.

## 5. Character Education through Curriculum Performance

Character education taught in the schools refer to the 2013 curriculum. The Ministry of Education and Culture integrates it throughout various subjects and activities in the education system. In other words, character teaching is not only concerned with one subject. Its teaching pattern follows the four core educational competencies which include: the core competencies in spiritual attitudes, social attitude, knowledge, and core skills. These four core competencies however, are taught by paying attention to the 18 character values proposed by the government, which include: (1) religious, (2) honest, (3) tolerance, (4) discipline, (5) hard work, (6) creative, (7) independent, (8) democratic, (9) curiosity, (10) national spirit, (11) love the country, (12) appreciate achievement, (13) friendly / communicative, (14) peace of mind, (15) love to read, (16) social care, (17) care for the environment, and (18) responsibility (Ministry of National Education, 2010).

These eighteen values have been included in the civil education book which later became the student's reference. The book discusses the following issues:

- The overview of enforcement of human rights
- My nation's fundamental principles
- Integrity of the country in NKRI
- Harmonization of central and regional governments
- Navigating the ark of justice in Indonesia
- The rights and obligations in democracy
- Knitting togetherness in diversity
- Building nation and state awareness

All of the chosen values are necessary for the construction of the country and are predominantly political in nature. This is evidenced in the values emphasized through character education, including: the determination of obedience values, responsibility, love for the country, and caring for the nation, state and surrounding community. Simultaneously, students are also expected to appreciate and believe in the philosophy of life of the Indonesian people, in the form of five principles (Pancasila). Students are treated as objects of character education that must be transformed into the model humans, as conceptualized by the state.

These values are translated by schools in different ways as conveyed in table 1. It is shown that students are placed as objects of education rather than as the subjects. However, each school institution has a different character teaching orientation. As a public education institution, for example, State High School 3 prioritizes the values of citizenship and expects their students to become good citizens, having a spirit of high citizenship and nationalism. Meanwhile, Islamic education focuses on religious values and expect students to become noble Muslims. Moreover, Taman Siswa as an educational institution upholds nationalism, and encourages students to absorb national, multicultural, and global insight so that they are more supportive of cultural diversity (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Character Values and Student Competencies in Three Schools

School Type	The Taught Values	The Expected Competence
State High School (Public)	Enforcement of human rights National principle National unity Harmonization Social justice Democracy Diversity Social responsibility	Obedience Responsible Love the country Concern Tolerance
Mu'allimat High School (Religious Orientation)	Aqeedah Good manners Noble value Social association Ability to read the Koran	Honest Discipline Responsible Care Cooperation Tolerant Love peace Polite Responsive Proactive Solution maker Interactive Exemplary
Tamsis High School (Nationalist)	Islam Science & technology Art and culture Religion Arabic English Leadership Entrepreneurship Nationalism insight Technological superiority	Having the global outlook Nationality Cultured National personality Mastering information technology Noble character Spirited leadership Independence Diversity (tolerance) Mutual respect Good character

The table above shows that even though the schools have implemented the curriculum according to their choice, they are poor in the educational learning approach. The educational process therefore, does not include explanation and participation, rather it is limited to discipline and teaching, as proved by the activities conducted in the classroom. The practice of curriculum implementation is still very strong in promoting knowledge recognition rather than attitudes. Students are more active in knowing, memorizing, and remembering various material about government regulations, various institutions and the nation. They are more focused on performing prayers in accordance with religious teachings, rather than implementing and practicing Islamic values in everyday life, both in school and in society.

## 6. Discussion: Misrepresentation of Diversity

The research conducted in the chosen three schools produced a discussion on how to make character education in Indonesian schools more grounded and internalize the noble cultural and religious values. To answer these needs, the schools prepared a set of school bodies and curriculum to essentially, effectively produce students with a strong sense of character.

Character education is still considered a lesson that is less important than the basic subjects, such as Indonesian or mathematics: with this approach, schools and students only focus on improving the performance in conducting these fundamental subjects. Even though they consider character education less important, schools have built institutions that become an arena for character education by performing prayer and extracurricular activities. However, they lack

references and road maps to produce students with strong and distinctive characters. The process of strengthening character education is still running conventionally and randomly, with results that have not been measured. If measurements are to be taken, the aspects that can be appreciated are formalistic and quantitative rather than substantive and qualitative.

In addition, the curriculum is interpreted as the activity of transferring formal knowledge from teachers to students, rather than an educational process for students to develop a practicing of valuable character. This issue arises due to the educational design that promotes the achievement of curriculum activities measured quantitatively. In addition, it displaces students as the objects of education rather than subjects who actively take part in the learning processes. The education center is entirely at the hands of teachers who are considered as the masters of science and morality: the measures taken by the teacher affect the lives of students in school, even at home.

In addition, education is used as a tool in forcing students to absorb the values of obedience and discipline instead of the noble values that have been performed by the community. These noble values are still comprehensively functional and limited to the basic values of religion, honesty, and discipline. There are very limited class discussions on topics such as tolerance, peace of mind, caring for the environment, and social care, thus failing to improve the competence of students in dealing with the outside world. Likewise, discussions also lack the values related to competitiveness, including creativity, curiosity, and respect for achievement. The school curriculum tends to be normative and appealing as it encourage students to adopt commendable traits. Nonetheless, the curriculum does not include activities that increase student awareness related to environmental conservation, while social care is only implemented through visiting sick teachers or fellow students.

An affective value has yet to be established, real actions are not materialized in students' daily lives. In this context, it could be said that there has been no involvement of students in the process of social transformation. This tendency can be seen as a result of the learning process being limited to the classroom, as very few activities take place outside the book and classroom.

Character education has not been grounded due to lack of experience or discussion of cases in the classroom. The diverse student backgrounds of religion, ethnicity, and family can be used as a source of discussion on character. Similarly, the social environment provides rich learning material regarding both attitude and behavior. A student can be molded into a change maker, hero, or wise person with the help of narratives collected in a participatory activity. Students' eyes and ears can record daily social events that occur and discuss this information as a form of a rich learning material in the classroom. Such technique will be a powerful method in building student character as it endorses their involvement.

In order to practically implement character education, several steps should be taken. First, there is a need to change the educational paradigm from achievement-orientation to character education. The basic ideology of education is to make students experts in cognitive terms, mastering mathematics, English, and subjects that are considered essential in an increasingly competitive life. Not many people conceptualize education as a process of making students "good people", who will create a healthy and peaceful environment across the country. The focus of lessons is intended for achievement. In fact, goodness or character does not have an applied indicator at school. Similarly, the incentive system does not apply to exemplary virtuous students, in contrast to students who excel in mathematics or English.

Secondly, it is necessary to change the education curriculum in considering the position of students from objects to subjects. Therefore, they no longer have to memorize the value, instead, they should internalize it by forming a positive character for the promotion of national, state and religious life. It will also transform education into a more participatory nature that encourages students to be more involved in social activities. A student must be regarded as a representation of a social and cultural environment whose character has been shaped before involved in educational institutions. Therefore, in addition to representing themselves, they are also a representative of family and the community.

Thirdly, it is necessary to improve the school institutions to be more creative in developing character education. To this extent, the school has been trapped in a power ideology that subordinates them as agents who carry out the country's mission under the supervision of

educational authority. Yogyakarta State High School 3 is directly under the control of the Education Office which runs government decisions. Likewise, Taman Siswa High School is under the vision and mission of the Taman Siswa Community, who are bound to college decisions. The Mu'allimat High School is also under the control of the Muhammadiyah Education Council, who have the authority to develop policies applied to the school. In this position, students are objects subjected to policies with a range of interests. They are not regarded as subjects who come from families with diverse characters, parts of ethnic groups having cultural wealth, or religious backgrounds with social structuring.

The rigidity of educational institutions enables education to not be participatory. Besides this, it still has very strong nuances of "state-driven education", using the paradigm of "transfer of knowledge", which limits the possibility of student and public participation in character formation. The source of character formation becomes limited to the imagination of the state interpreted by schools. It does not accommodate the values that are dynamically present in society. The paradigmatic changes in education are a necessity, especially through opening school spaces to accept the local values present in society. In this way, education can take place democratically while cultural strength can be accommodated for in the teaching and learning process. Students will then be integrated with community values and individual-local intelligence, which can be transformed into the collective strength. Without collective values, a society will turn out to be fragile and vulnerable (Abdullah, 2018).

With a constructive approach, education can be transformed from textual to more contextual. It has a great power in encouraging students' transformation into a character that is in line with the objective conditions of their society. In this way, the schools' performance in transforming students into quality people can be improved. In order to carry out this transformative function, schools need to be adaptive to the social change contexts in becoming a more creative and innovative institution regarding the curriculum and learning methodology.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper proposes that character education is very important for the development of nations and countries, as well as in creating a humanistic community among the younger generation. Character education in schools in Indonesia are not yet in accordance with the ideal of creating a good, civil society. The delinquency problems and child crime will continue to challenge education in Indonesia; thus, a more grounded character education and development needs to be made. It is expected to be more contextual with the problem-solving needs and responsive to the dynamic environmental changes faced by young people.

The research conducted in the three schools show an internalization of the cultural, national, citizenship, and religious values for students in developing a noble and positive character, of whom practice responsibility, honesty, independence, and creativity. However, the ability of schools is still weak in encouraging character formation, so it is not as effective in developing a strong character in students. The school does not have a strong concept or road map in carrying out the character education missions. Additionally, the school curriculum has not been grounded, so it is unable to build a capacity of students who actively and effectively engage as good civilians.

It is necessary to change the paradigm of education in the future, not only to produce students who are intelligent and virtuous, but also who will actively build their nation and country in a globalized society. The state interests including budget policies, governance regulations, and curriculum need to be reviewed. Therefore, it would not reduce the school creativity in adding local aspects to education and giving students the competencies needed in engaging with real life. The government should not carry out the role of "owner" of the school that demands the compliance, but as a "facilitator" of education that supports the needs in order to achieve its vision and mission. With the autonomy status obtained by the school, it will provide a conducive climate for the emergence of various approaches in character education that are based on the ideological differences of each. This diversity will give rise to enrichment in personality and enable educated people to identify and solve issues with a more comprehensive approach.

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