

Teacher Leadership in Building Student Character: Educational Challenges in the 21st Century

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Abstract—Education is a medium in improving one's self-quality. On the other hand, along with the times and various advances in technology and information, education is faced with big issues related to the character of students who currently have a very worrisome morality. It cannot be denied that the developments that occur in each era will have negative and positive impacts. In the education process, the existence of teachers as educators has a great responsibility because with the advancement of technology and information, not only can make a person smart but also can make a person has a bad moral and character. Having superior intelligence is a desirable achievement, but it does not mean ignoring the values of culture and character. To that end, the soul of leadership also needs to be owned by every teacher as an educator as a leader must be able to lead as well as bring students to a better change. This research illustrates how teacher's actions can influence and play a major role in student character and soft skill building.

Keywords—teacher, student, leadership, character

I. INTRODUCTION

Changes can bring about positive and negative impacts. Moral, social, cultural, and educational changes will be felt by every human being. Various problems occur such as brawl among students. In 2011, 9 cases of violence involving students were recorded and in 2012 and 2013 as many as five cases, [1]. In 2016, there were 43 cases of student brawl in DIY [2]. In 2017, 11 students also got involved in brawl after graduation [3]. Meanwhile, in 2018 17 students wanted to fight for brawl and were secured by Polresta Yogyakarta [4]. This condition is a picture of the behavior of students who are undirected. Brawls may be caused by a lack of school and family attention to the values of characters that should be present in every student.

Education should be a bridge to all challenges that are being faced in the 21st century, for which various efforts have been made by the government. Basically, education is a medium to explore, build, and empower the potential of the younger generation. The process

of education is not solely to create individual knowledge but also to create qualified individuals in skill, character, and competitiveness so that they can adapt themselves to all challenges. In every educational process, teachers are at the forefront of great contributions to students. A profession as a teacher is not an easy thing. A teacher as defined by Wina Sanjaya [5] has a deep meaning, not only to provide teaching materials but also to reach ethics and aesthetic behaviors in facing the challenges of life in society.

In this 21st century, a lot of changes have been felt. These changes have even spread in all aspects of human life, especially with the increasing progress in the field of technology and information. Progress in the field of technology and information will lead to a variety of changes in human behavior patterns, changes in the labor system in a company, and may also lead to culture. Advanced technology will make a person very easy to access anything that can lead to communication and information exchange among nations. The progress of the times can change the pattern of human life, and thus the field of education is expected to be more stringent and quicker in determining the strategy in order to lead students to a positive goal. The statement emphasizes that teachers should be able to be role models for students as the motto Tut Wuri Handayani that reads *ing ngarsa sung tulada, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani*. Tut Wuri Handayani's motto means that teachers as leaders should set an example, arouse interest, and give moral encouragement and passion to students. This can be seen through the teachers' actions and speech when inside and outside the school environment. As it is known that teachers have a great opportunity in shaping quality students intellectually and morally. It cannot be denied, however, that student-related phenomena show that Indonesian students experience serious problems, not only in skills and knowledge but also on moral issues. Various problems occur such as student delinquency, indiscipline, mistrust of self, cheating habits, and

unsatisfactory learning outcomes. These problems prove that the role of teachers in shaping the personality of students is still not maximal. Although basically the family and parents are the first school for a student, the teacher also has a lot of responsibilities.

Viewed from the growth of the era and the emergence of all progresses in the 21st century, teachers should have 4 competencies that are considered unable to be totally distributed to the students' development either in terms of competence or characters. Things to consider in addition to mastering the competence of teachers is leadership. The word leadership here is not limited to that of the school principal only but also include that of teachers.

II. RELATED WORKS/ LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hasibuan [6], a leader is "someone who uses his authority and leadership to direct others and is responsible for the person's work in achieving a goal". According to Carr, M. L [7], leadership is a process, not a set of individual skills that are innate or taught. This concept illustrates that a leader must strive optimally to mobilize subordinates so that they can cooperate productively to achieve the goal. In line with Hughes' statement, Ginnett & Curphy [8] mention that "leadership is the process of influencing an organized group toward the achievement of the group's goals".

In the education context, leadership should be shown not only by the principal but also by teachers. It is important for teachers are those who will control and direct the students at school. Therefore, teacher leadership is also an educational leadership that should be the focus of attention. According to Idochi [9], teacher leadership is the ability of a teacher in influencing his students, so that the students behave as desired by the teacher. During this time, the teacher is the person who became the benchmark for the picture of student action. It must be admitted that a student will certainly hear, see, and even imitate a teacher's behavior, and this proves that the teacher plays an important role in influencing the character of the student.

Teachers must be able to understand every child's development so that they can apply the appropriate actions and determine the appropriate leadership styles in dealing with various students who have many differences. Smith, P. Sean Hayes, Meredith L. Lyons, & Kiira M [10] viewed child development from three environmental systems i.e. microsystems, ecosystems, and macro-systems which can assist us in understanding how instructional teacher leadership in the true sense - that is, full-time classroom teachers who also become instructional leaders - create and react to opportunities to lead. According to the Bronfenbrenner ecological theory applied in their study, each of the ecological systems has its own sub-system such as family, school environment cultures,

peers, and the environment cultures of the society that contribute to the formation of student character.

Suriyansah & Aslamiyah, [11] stated that there are 4 thinking skills for the future (global era) related to the character of students: (1) The synthesizing mind, i.e. the ability to collect, understand, and synthesize various information; (2) The creating mind, i.e. the ability to use various information to solve problems or produce products that are beneficial for oneself and society; (3) The respectful mind, i.e. the ability and willingness of a person to appreciate the way of thinking and acting of others; (4) The ethical mind, i.e. one's willingness to uphold the values of ethics in general.

By knowing and understanding the development of children or students, teachers who have more time can set the right strategy in directing students in order to achieve a better change. Good changes that occur in students can be marked by the attitude of students in the learning process.

Concerning teachers' leadership, Cheng [12] reveals that when a class can develop friendly, trustful, and respectful relationships with students, and use his/her own professional knowledge, skills, personality, and charisma but not punishment to influence students, then the students will tend to have positive attitudes to their teachers, the school, and learning. Therefore, teacher leadership will have a great impact on the students' character, and a positive impact will be generated if the application of leadership is in accordance with the needs of the students. Ngang & Abdullah [13] mention that there are six dimensions of teacher leadership practice: meeting and minimizing crisis, seeking and charting improvement, extending the vision, securing environment, building capacity, and creating energy in the classroom.

III. MATERIAL & METHODOLOGY

This was a literature study focusing on several phenomena related to education. The discussion was reviewed by utilizing several sources such as print media and the Internet.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characters can be formed through every learning process at school. Judging from the important role of teachers, there are two things to understand that teaching and educating are two different things. Both of these understandings should not run in different directions because when they don't, it is very possible that there will be students who are smart academically but poor in characters, and vice versa.

Actions that teachers do to students are very meaningful for students. Therefore, the teacher should be able to set a good example for their students. Meanwhile, Stronge [14] revealed that the characteristics of teacher leadership are: 1) focusing

on the individual; 2) managing student behaviors effectively; 3) being able to organize work; 4) realizing student progress; and 5) being professional. Based on the above characteristics, it can be clarified that basically teacher leadership includes all the actions of teachers who are able to direct students to achieve success in accordance with the demands and challenges that exist in every development of the times.

A teacher or a lecturer at any institutions must understand how to bring students or people who are under his responsibility in order to explore, achieve, and empower their potential. In the case of teachers in Indonesia, they should not be monotonously guided by national examination, instead they should become an educational icon for other countries who have excellence in the field of science. Education in Indonesia also upholds characters that will make the younger generation use the knowledge they have for doing good deeds that are beneficial to many people.

With the teacher's leadership in building the student's abilities and motivating them, it is expected that the students will have the ability to collect, understand, and synthesize the various information obtained. In this case, a teacher is required to have an appropriate strategy to generate a critical mindset of the students in managing information/knowledge gained during the learning process. A teacher is also expected to improve the quality of their communication with the students in order to establish a familial relationship between the two sides. Thus, mutual respect can grow within students so as to reduce their aggressiveness towards teachers or against other students. In addition, a teacher should be able to identify students' abilities because each student has different skills and abilities, and thus the students can develop skills according to their potential and ultimately provide something useful for themselves or the community. With the hope that the students can grow according to their individual potential, teachers should be able to broaden their vision of classroom learning. In order to achieve the new vision that is created in the learning process, the teacher should ensure that the students as much as possible avoid negative influences from outside of the educational environment with the intention that learning is not only intended to transfer academic knowledge but also to foster ethical values.

Effective teachers' leadership practices are expected not only to build student intellectuals but also to build student character. Teachers in the process of education in schools will surely deal with every element that exists such as infrastructure facilities, students, colleagues, school culture, and so on that are used solely to lead students to success as the national educational goals of educating the life of the nation.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that being a leader is not only the right and duty of the school headmaster, but leadership must also be mastered by a teacher because the teacher is a leader who is closer and has a direct relationship with the students in the class. The formation of student character and soft skills should be the main target for a teacher to face the challenges in the 21st century so that any changes that occur can still be controlled and conditioned with appropriate policies and strategies.

As a leader, a teacher has to improve the following qualities:

1. the ability to collect, understand, and synthesize various information;
2. the ability to use the various information they have understood for useful things;
3. the ability and willingness to appreciate any differences among the students;
4. the willingness to uphold ethical values.

For the government and society, they must also support the practice of this teacher leadership. Various forms of teacher development on leadership practice should be made through various programs. The role of the community in this case is to participate in the character building of students when they are outside of the school environment. Families and parents should be aware and understand the development of their children's character. Support is needed because teachers cannot work alone without any parents' support for building characters is not an easy task.

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