

Management Education of Independent and Creative Character for Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Schools (Case Study at SuryoBimoKresno Elementary School Semarang)

Elok Mutiara Rakhmawati¹, Widiyanto², Tri Suminar³

(Department Management Education, Postgraduate School, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia)

ABSTRACT : This research explores the management of character education that focuses on independence and creativity characters adjusted for ABK by taking the research location at SuryoBimoKresnoelementary (SD SBK) Semarang. The main focus of the research is to understand and analyze how to manage character education for children with special needs focuses on independent and creative characters. In collecting data, the research used 3 different methods, observation, interviews and questionnaires. Then, the triangulation method was applied to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. The findings show that the management education of independent and creative characters for ABK consist 3 stages, including planning, implementation and evaluation processes. In the first stage, teacher tried to pay more attention to character education than academics as a response to the decline in children's moral character, especially independent and creative character. In accordance with the principal's direction, the teacher uses a cooperative learning model to ensure character education runs well. In implementation process, a repeated habituation model is used to instill independent and creative character, with the support of a reward and punishment system. However, character education evaluation faces challenges because there is no clear target, even though homeroom teachers have their own indicators to assess the success of independent and creative character education.

KEYWORDS –*Character education, children with special needs, creative, independent*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of self-development that is carried out continuously throughout life in order to improve a person's abilities, knowledge, understanding or skills. As explained in the UUD 1945, article 31 paragraph 1, states that every citizen has the right to get good quality education provided by the government of the Republic of Indonesia. The education process as a right and obligation for all children without discrimination in any aspects, such as gender, age or a person's condition. Therefore, every citizen has the right to get good education, including children with special needs (ABK).

It is irrefutable that there are differences in basic abilities between normal students and ABK students. So, in any case, especially in the field of education, ABK requires different and more intensive treatment than normal/regular students. From this condition, educational institutions willing to implement inclusive education programs emerged. This institution usually called by society as inclusive school. Inclusive schools are schools withan education service system that regulates the children with special needs are not discriminated, such as not discriminating against students' conditions whether with regard to physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, ethnicity, religion, gender, skills or other conditions (Rofisian, 2018). In this school, ABK students can study together with the same accessibility as regular students, but with different approach adjusted to the conditions of each ABK. This is what SuryoBimoKresnoelementary school (SD SBK) has implemented as one of the inclusive schools in Semarang.

As a formal educational institution in Indonesia, SD SBK tries to implement Republic of Indonesia Law No. 20 of 2013 concerning on the goal of national education system, that isconsciously trying to focus on developing physical and spiritual potential, mental and individual development and social on student. In other words, SD SBK in its educational process tries to make people who are not only intelligent, but also have good character. According toLickona, (2012), good character includes knowledge about goodness (moral knowing), then creates commitment (intention) towards goodness (moral feeling), and finally actually doing good (moral action).

Character education has a higher meaning than moral education because character education is not only about right or wrong, but how to create habits about good things in life so that children have high awareness, good understanding and commitment to establish virtue in daily life(Harun, 2013). In order to implement the

values of character education, it is necessary to pay attention to the characteristics of ABK in formulating forms of activities, methods, media, and so on (Listiady et al., 2016). Therefore, the character that will be instilled in students with special needs to be adjusted based on their potential and the things around them.

This research will focus on 2 characters that are considered very important for ABK, independence and creativity. Independence is defined as a mindset and habit of not depending on other people (Aini & Taman, 2012). This character has become an aspect of attitude that needs to be considered in character education as stated in Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education (Hapsara, 2019). In general, independence can be divided into 4 forms, emotional independence, economic independence, intellectual independence and social independence (Neli et al., 2020). The study will only focus on emotional independence, intellectual and social independence. These 3 forms of independence will have an important role in the ABK's life. With this character, hopefully ABK can reduce their dependence on other people, both when learning and in living their daily activity.

For creative character, it has various definitions and has been defined by experts in different ways and in different scientific disciplines. In the educational context, creative or creativity, known as "innovation", in business it is known as "entrepreneurship", in mathematics it is known as "problem solving", and in the world of music it is known as "performance or composition" (Gomez, 2007). According to Ravari & Salari (2015), in the world of education, creativity is related to genetic and innate factors, but it cannot be denied that the role of parents, teachers and the educational environment is in providing conditions that can trigger creativity in student learning. Another definition of creative character is defined by Ika (2019). Creativity is the ability to carry out an action to create new creations which are realized in the form of thoughts and/or objects. In the form of thoughts include new ideas, concepts and theories. Meanwhile, in the form of objects, they are manifestations or results of thoughts that can be seen, touched or felt. By having a creative nature, a person will have 4 advantages in life, including (a) providing opportunities for individuals to actualize themselves, (b) providing the ability to find various alternatives in solving problems, (c) providing life satisfaction, and (d) allows someone to improve their quality of life (Ika, 2019).

In daily teaching and learning activities (KBM), SBK has a quite challenging problem. The institution has students with varying types of special needs, such as autism, ADHD, down syndrome, etc. Obviously, different special needs require different treatment as well. Hence, teachers must be able to create a learning system that can be accepted by all of ABK students. In certain cases, ABK at SD SBK need a shadow teacher other than the class teacher. Shadow teacher will help and assist ABK student such that they can follow the learning activity process. However, a new problem arises. Sometimes, the children with special needs (ABK) do not get along with their shadow teachers or class teachers, which results in the teaching and learning activities being hampered. In addition, the number of teaching staff and shadow teachers who are not balanced with the number of ABK who have an independent and creative character, automatically hinder teaching and learning.

Based on the explanation above, a synergy is crucially needed between teachers and ABK in order to create optimal learning activities. From the ABK's perspective, they should have an independent and creative character such that they are able to follow learning activity. At the same time, teachers are required to carry out appropriate management so that learning and education of these two characters at SBK can run well. In the implementation process, Mulyono (2008) said that management has special tasks that must be carried out, which are usually referred to as management functions. According to Terry (2009), there are five combinations of fundamental management functions in order to achieve goals. These five combinations can be distilled into three main management functions, including planning, organizing and monitoring. In accordance with the above background, the research to conduct scientific studies regarding the management of independent and creative character value education that focuses on children with special need (ABK).

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative and using phenomenological approach. Phenomenological approach can be defined as scientific research that examines and investigates an event experienced by an individual, a group of individuals, or a group of living creatures (Nasir et al., 2023). Further, the research tries to study the experiences gained by individuals and groups of people in full awareness. Here, individuals and groups of people refer to ABK, ABK's parent, teacher and school principal. In order to gain more insight, the study took 2 classes for comparison study, upper class and lower class. Upper class means 4th grade student, whereas lower class is 1st grade student in SD SBK. For total, there will be 10 ABK divided into these classes. Note that in 1 student may has more than one special need as the distribution can be seen in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Type of special need of student (ABK)

No	Type of ABK	Definition	Total
1	Intellectual disability	condition characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. It typically manifests during the developmental period, and individuals with intellectual disabilities may experience challenges in areas such as reasoning, problem-solving, learning, and everyday social and practical skills.	2
2	ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)	Neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that interfere with functioning or development	5
3	Autism	Complex neurodevelopmental condition characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication. People with autism often experience differences in how they communicate, interact with others, and perceive the world around them	3
4	Speech delay	Condition where a child's development of speech is slower than typical for their age.	6
5	OCD (obsessive - compulsive disorder)	Anxiety disorders characterized by obsessive thoughts (unwanted and repetitive thoughts, urges, or images) and compulsive behaviors (repetitive behaviors or mental actions performed to reduce anxiety caused by obsessions)	1

Data sources for the research come from 2 different sources, primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are data obtained from interviews and distributing questionnaires to participants. Meanwhile, secondary data is data used to support primary data through literature studies, photos, documents and written archives that support the objectives of this research. The detail of data sources in the study can be seen in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Data sources detail

No	Data	Data source	Data collection methods
1	SD SBK's profile a. History of SD SBK b. Vision, mission and goals c. Demography of ABK student	Principal school and documentation	Interview and documentation
2	Learning Activity in both upper class and lower class of SD SBK	Observation and interview with classroom teacher	Interview and documentation
3	Independent and character education planning	Principal school and classroom teacher	Interview
4	Implementation of independent and creative character education	Classroom teacher	Interview and questionnaire
5	Evaluation process	Principal school, teacher and ABK's parents	Interview and questionnaire

In order to ensure that data collected is in accordance with the objectives and character of the research, it is necessary to do validity test for the data. This test involved 3 techniques, including the audit trail technique, member check and triangulation. Audit trail is a technique that refers to detailed documentation of all steps and decisions taken during research, so that this research can be traced back and the validity of the findings can be evaluated by anyone. The member check is used to ensure the researcher has good understanding interpreting data by returning the results or interpretation to the research participants.

As explained above, the triangulation techniques in the study are also involved. There are 3 types of triangulations used, (1) Source Triangulation, (2) Method Triangulation, and (3) Theory Triangulation. The source triangulation technique involves multiple data sources to confirm information or findings. Meanwhile, triangulation method adopts various data collection methods to check the consistency of the results. As explained, this research uses interviews, questionnaires and observation methods. In theoretical triangulation, data interpretation will be carried out based on various perspectives or theories. By applying various theories, the study can produce a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under research.

III. RESULTS

It cannot be denied that educational management is one of the important keys to the success of the learning process and character education in schools. Good educational management will easily help the

institutions achieve their vision, mission and goals set. In inclusive schools, good management education become mandatory and crucial considering that the challenges and situations faced are more complex than in ordinary/normal schools. For instance, in inclusive schools, there were students who have various limitations and special needs, where some of them need more support than other children with special needs. At the same time, the limited number of teachers also become new problem. With imbalance proportion between teacher and ABK, it will hinder learning activity process. Below are the results of research on the management of independent and creative character education at SBK Elementary School (SD SBK).

Planning process for Independent and Creative Character Education at SD SBK

Nowadays, character values have become a crucial aspect in education process in Indonesia. As contained in the National Education System Law no. 20 of 2003, the aim of education is to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and are devoted to God, have noble character, are capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. This law also states that there are several main character values that must be developed in students, including integrity, mutual cooperation, independence, religion and nationalist values.

In order to support that law, the school principal of SD SBK gives direction to teachers to implement a cooperative learning system. Cooperative learning system is a learning system that consciously and deliberately develops nurturing interactions among students to avoid offense and misunderstandings that can give rise to hostility (Kusnandar, 2007). This learning system makes students become the center of learning and the teacher will act as a partner and friend of the students. By applying this, principal school believe that it becomes booster for learning process and instill character values.

Based on several expert studies, cooperative learning has advantages compared to other learning systems, where this model is quite effective in improving the quality of the learning process in terms of student activity (Herianto & Ibrahim, 2017). In this case, students are given a chance and "stage" to be able to express their opinions, discuss a view, the experiences gain when they are studying together in formulating a group view (Isjoni, 2010). Apart from that, cooperative learning is also effective for conveying complex material and things such as algebra material in mathematics (Arianti et al., 2018).

However, it was found that several teachers in planning character education did not fully refer to the law and the school principal's directions. This is due to internal factors, that is there are so many students with varying types of special needs in the class. This situation prompts teachers to seek alternative strategies to keep the teaching and learning activities running. Apart from that, the lack of supporting facilities is also another cause of this problem. For example, there are only 7 teachers at SD SBK, assigned to teach 6 classes consisting of 45 students. At the same time, there are some students who need shadows teacher (assistance) to help them in learning activities. Because of these limitations, the school asks parents to look for their own shadow teachers from outside. The lack of facilities can also be seen from the limited teaching aids or sports equipment that do not accommodate the needs of ABK.

Another factor that drives teachers to explore alternative learning systems is the limitations of cooperative learning itself. The effectiveness of Cooperative learning is very dependent on student learning motivation, learning skills, as well as dedication and high performance from teachers (Herianto & Ibrahim, 2017). Additionally, cooperative learning can be less effective in discussion sessions, where topics often expand beyond the intended scope and time constraints. Furthermore, if one student dominates the discussion, it can cause others to become passive participants (Isjoni, 2010).

Implementation of Independent and Creative character education

A good character education must be carried out comprehensively and adapted to the surrounding environment. This is what the teachers at SD SBK are striving for. As is well known, there are various types of special needs students (ABK), which result in significant disparities in abilities among students, necessitating appropriate methods for character education.

During the teaching and learning process (KBM), the teachers try to develop important traits that support learning, such as independence and creativity characters, which are the focus of the researcher. These characters are crucial for students because they act as catalysts, making the learning process more effective and efficient. Although these traits are considered essential in the learning process, they are not set as explicit targets in character education. Interestingly, findings in the class based on observation and interview, reveal that there are no specific goals for character education.

Even though there is a commitment to achieving something, without a clear target, measuring the level of success of character education will be difficult. In addition, the character education evaluation process will also become more complex. This has been conveyed by Sutarman et al. (2020) in their research entitled "Management of character education strengthening strategies in students". In order to achieve good and ideal

character education, it is necessary to observe the environment, identify weaknesses and strengths, including determining targets to facilitate the evaluation process. Here is an overview of some of the practices carried out by teachers in the process of character education. In the lower class, to ensure a positive classroom atmosphere, students who have already grasped specific material are provided with additional practice problems compared to their classmates. This strategy aims to boost the students' self-reliance in handling tasks and to mitigate the emergence of negative behaviors like jealousy, arrogance, and a lack of empathy. Furthermore, students are taught to use the restroom on their own to promote their independence. They are also encouraged to take initiative in class by leading prayers or performing assignments. Currently, teachers are promoting creativity by allowing students to express their imagination through tasks such as making crafts or drawing based on certain theme.

Based on interviews with lower class teachers, there are three attitudes prioritized over independence and creativity. These attitudes include discipline, a sense of responsibility, especially in school, and the proper way of apologizing when making mistakes with friends or teachers. According to the teachers, these three attitudes are more necessary for lower-grade students in their learning activities.

However, teachers prefer to integrate multiple character traits simultaneously during one period in the class. Interestingly, the promotion of independence is also included within this approach. For instance, by completing the tasks assigned by the teacher, students are trained to develop a sense of responsibility, independence, and discipline. Meanwhile, in terms of apologizing, students are taught to embody social values such as empathy and the courage to apologize.

In contrast to the lower class, upper class students are emphasized to develop traits such as independence, honesty, and discipline. With independence, students are expected to manage themselves effectively. Honesty and discipline are encouraged by teachers to foster a sense of responsibility. Although creativity is not a primary focus in character education for upper class students, those approaching the highest grade (Grade 6), who are preparing for national exams, are taught to develop creative skills to help them pass the exams successfully.

In implementing character education, particularly focusing on independence and creativity, both in lower and upper class, the principal and teachers adhere to a system of repetitive and continuous habituation. They believe that if a character trait is practiced consistently, it will become ingrained naturally. An example provided by teachers is the morning habituation activity, including praying to start the lesson, reciting the Asmaul Husna (for Muslims), and singing the national anthem. According to research by Rusmana (2019) and the opinion of Russel William in Ainissyifa (2014), the approach taken by the teachers is correct. Character can be likened to a muscle: it will become flabby if not exercised and strong if trained continuously. Students who are taught and instilled with values of independence and creativity consistently and repeatedly are akin to bodybuilders who engage in regular gym activities to shape their bodies. Thus, over time, the daily instillation of these two character traits will become ingrained in the students and carry over to subsequent levels.

Evaluation process of Independent and Creative character education

A good character education must involve all parties and consider the surrounding conditions and environment. At SD SBK, given the variety of special needs students (ABK) and the limited number of teaching staff, the teachers must adapt the curriculum used. There are two curricula in use, the "K13" curriculum for lower class and "the Merdeka" curriculum for upper class. Both curricula are then modified such that their implementation focuses more on character development rather than academics. This adjustment is part of the teachers' concern for children's character in recently years. Numerous cases involving students are attributed to a decline in moral character, and ABK, who are prone to tantrums, are especially vulnerable to such issues. Therefore, the teachers have decided to emphasize more on character education, particularly focusing on independence, creativity, responsibility, honesty, and discipline. According to the Ministry of National Education, these are the character traits that elementary school children should possess (Baginda, 2018).

Another reason why the teachers prioritize character education over academics for ABK is due to demands and assumptions from some parents who believe that character education is solely the school's responsibility. This assumption contradicts what Ravari & Salari (2015) said in their research that parents play more crucial role in character education in a child. Furthermore, research conducted by Wulandari & Kristiawan (2017) utilizes the role of parents in character education for special needs children.

In order to measure the success of character education, teachers have set minimum competency standards, even though the principal has not specified any particular character traits as indicators of success. In this case, in line with the research objectives, this study attempts to focus solely on the traits of independence and creativity. This is intended to simplify the evaluation process. Based on interviews with classroom teachers, lower and upper class have different competency standards. In lower class, a student is considered to have the values of independence and creativity if they are willing to write and can complete tasks without assistance.

In upper class, the minimum standard is given below: (a) the student can understand and complete instructions from the teacher, (b) the student can independently complete the teacher's instructions without assistance from the teacher or a peer, and (c) the student has self-confidence and can control their own emotions.

Based on observations, the level of independence among upper class students is generally quite good according to the competency standards. They are able to complete school assignments independently, although sometimes there are students who still require special guidance from a shadow teacher. In terms of self-confidence, the majority of students are quite good and are willing to do assignments in front of the class, even without a shadow teacher. Compared to upper class, students in lower class have a higher level of independence. They are able to complete assignments given by the teacher without assistance. In fact, they often compete to go to the front of the class to answer questions. However, there is one child who still has difficulty socializing because they are unable to separate from their mother. This child will only obey the teacher's instructions when their mother is present.

To encourage students, teachers usually give rewards to ABK, such as stickers, prizes, or praise. Conversely, if students make mistakes, teachers will correct them calmly and patiently. This is intended to motivate students to become more enthusiastic in practicing character education, especially for independence and creative character. From an educational perspective, teachers are trying to introduce the system of "rewards" and "punishments" to ABK. This system is known as a "reinforcement" model, where rewards are positive reinforcements and punishments are negative reinforcements. If used correctly and wisely, this system can be a motivating tool for students (Kompri, 2018).

Based on observations, the teachers have been quite wise and good in implementing the reinforcement system. This condition can be observed from the behavior of teachers who never carry out physical punishment. Teachers prefer other methods such as advising and guiding students patiently. According to Anggraini et al. (2019), this is an appropriate action because physical punishment has been proven to be ineffective in changing children's behavior, educating children's character, and can have negative impacts on children's psychological condition. Furthermore, uncontrolled physical punishment poses a fatal risk to ABK, not only causing injuries but also potentially leading the teacher to face legal consequences.

Apart from teachers, the results show that ABK's parents have their own minimum standards in assessing whether their children have independent and creative character or not. In terms of independence, almost all parents have the same standards and benchmarks. They will consider their child to be independent when the child is able to carry out daily routine activities on their own, such as eating, drinking, bathing, being able to socialize, wearing their own clothes, studying and cleaning up toys without being asked. In the contrary, the parents of ABK students have very broad and complex meaning and definition. They have their own standards and indicators in this aspect. This phenomenon can occur due to the differences in types of special needs children, which affect the parameters observed by the parents. For example, parents of a child with a speech delay might consider their child to be creative if the child is able to create something involving creativity, such as baking, drawing cartoons, anime, mountains, or decorating with fairy lights. For parents of children with ADHD and difficulties in socializing may view their child as creative if they are able to draw and color pictures, socialize, and show initiative in activities, such as wanting to clean up toys, lifting clothes when it's drizzling, and so on.

However, from the 10 parents, there was an unwritten indicator agreement that could be used to assess whether ABK has creative character, namely in drawing and coloring. These two things became the basic standard for parents to say that their child is creative. Therefore, it is important that these two things are taught in the classroom such that the goals of parents and teachers in building children's creativity can be realized. Besides the 2 things above, there are other alternative models that can be used to foster creative traits in children. Both upper class and lower class teachers agree that increasing creative activities can build student creativity by itself. Activities that can be carried out include utilizing traditional arts. According to Listiady et al. (2016), learning activities with this model are very effective as a catalyst in fostering creative character. It has been proven that through traditional art in the form of ketoprak, the creativity of ABK grows by 9%. Another model that can be considered is using traditional games to develop creative character in ABK. Children's traditional games contain noble values inherited from ancient ancestors which need to be taught to the next generation, including ABK (Syamsi & Tahar, 2021).

IV. CONCLUSION

The implementation of character education focusing on independence and creativity for children with special needs (ABK) at SD SBK has been thoroughly reviewed. The process consists 3 stages, including planning, execution, and evaluation. Teachers prioritized character education over academics, aiming to address moral concerns prevalent among students, especially ABK. The cooperative learning model was used to support this process. In both upper and lower class, the same implementation model was applied, though with different indicators. Teachers used a repetitive system to instill these values, believing that consistent practice would embed independence and creative character in ABK. In order to enhance ABK's motivation, a reward and

punishment system was introduced. However, evaluation was challenging due to the lack of a unified target for measuring success. Teachers set their own indicators, where in lower class, independence and creativity were assessed by a student's willingness to write and complete tasks without assistance, while in upper class, it was based on a student's ability to follow instructions, work independently, and manage emotions.

In conclusion, character education specifically designed for ABK, particularly in fostering independence and creativity, requires adaptive approaches tailored to individual needs. With the right strategies, consistent support, and a conducive environment, ABK can effectively develop these characters, which are essential for overcoming challenges, seizing opportunities, and improving their quality of life.

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