

## **SHAPING STUDENTS' CHARACTER THROUGH MARKET PLACE ACTIVITIES (MPA) AT A SECONDARY BOARDING SCHOOL**

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### **Abstract**

Market Place Activities (MPA) strategy is a learning strategy that combines the exploration of knowledge and the improvement of attitude. It had been conducted for three years and implemented only to 56 students in two classrooms. The values were mainly focused on learning confidence, tolerance, peer assistance, and appreciation. As a part of formal learning activities, it took place twice a week during the morning session on compulsory lesson and afternoon session during guided extracurricular activities. The learning topics given in this best practice were suited with National Syllabus for the purpose of leading students to improve their English standard competency as stated in the syllabus. During the implementation of this best practice, students activities were observed, learning progress was assessed and character building was also monitored through peer assessment, self - assessment and teacher observation. The result of this best practice showed a positive impact in terms of students' interaction. They showed more tolerance, appreciation to other friends when giving ideas and collaborative learning among students existed. It was obvious that the smarter students were assisting lower achievement students in the assigned topics. They were also more confident in conversation and explaining the lesson they have learned. In addition, there was significant progress in students' language competency as indicated in the syllabus. Findings from this best practice can be a platform for further activities in the near future which may be involving more classrooms and more numbers of students.

**Keywords:** Market Place Activities (MPA), Students' Character, Secondary Boarding School

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Character-Based Education in Indonesia**

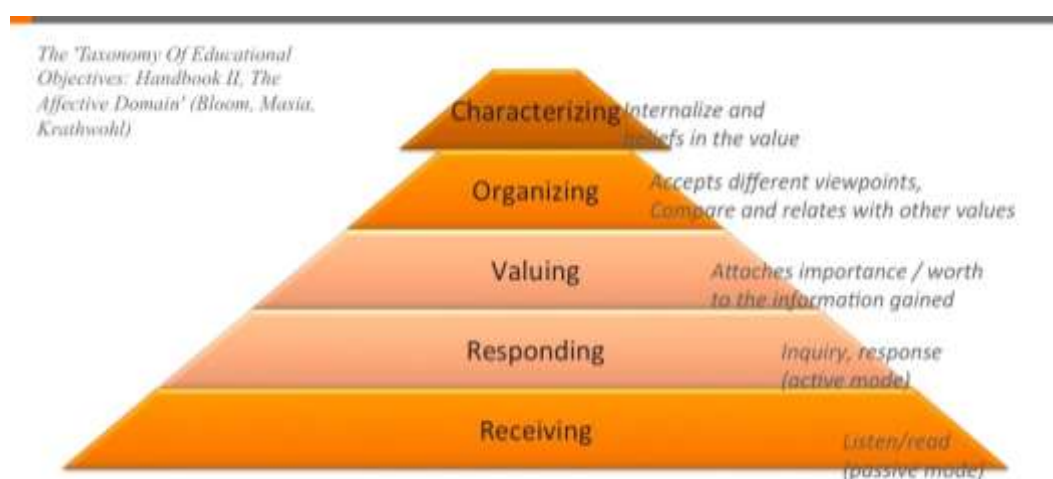
Along with the implementation of Curriculum 2013, the idea of internalizing character values in education is at the priority. Indonesian Ministry of Education has mandated the division of secondary education to put higher concern on this issue. Many programs to support the implementation of character-based education have been conducted. More training and workshops are held to facilitate and support teachers at schools. In its implementation, the government is still controlling the progress of the program. The question is, why is the issue raised?

The fact that conventional education system was isolating the teaching of moral values at school had resulted in the moral degradation of most young adults today. This statement was highlighted due to the current situation regarding the economy, politics as well as social crimes. To support this statement Direktorat Pembinaan Sekolah Menengah Atas Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Secondary school division of Ministry of Education, 2017) released a handbook as a guidebook in the implementation of National Curriculum 2013 regarding character-based education in

Indonesia. The significant messages conveyed from the book that positive values and good character is generated from a healthy ecosystem and culture of the school supported with a healthy environment of family and community.

Furthermore, the handbook also points out that cultivating positive values is not merely through transferring knowledge. Instead, it exists in the explicit curriculum, integrated into all subjects at school and hidden curriculum, in which teachers are as role models and teaching-learning process emphasizing in moral values. In addition to these, curricular activities, texts books, and other learning sources should contain positive hidden messages that stimulate students to practice those values consistently. Similarly, learning environment, social culture at school and a positive relationship between family and school will also help students in developing positive character.

The ministry of education through its handbook has also adopted Benjamin Bloom Affective Domain Categories as illustrated in the following pyramid by Moosa (2017) and summarized as follow.



**Figure 1.** The taxonomy of education objectives (Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia, 1956)

The above pyramid illustrates the stages of how positive values are internalized to be an unconscious habit and strong positive character. It starts for the students receiving or attending to a certain value. In this stage, they know and understand the values from watching and listening attentively to someone or movie, and are able to distinguish between good and bad value. Then the second stage, they actively participate in the discussion, respond to others in a conversation and other reactions. The next level is valuing, where students are able to see something and express it. Here they propose a plan, accept or decline an idea, or inform others of a possible issue. A further stage is organizing, in this state, they have the ability to prioritize and organize their activity. The highest level of this domain is characterizing, they are able to internalize the values, which can control their behavior consistently. At this level, their habits and character are formed.

Apart from adopting Bloom Taxonomy into character-based education, the government has also embraced more local wisdom coming from across Indonesia. Each

part of the country is free to adjust its local wisdom and social values in order to enrich school positive culture and enhance the quality of character-based education at school.

### **The Urgency of Shaping students Character**

The emergence of character education in Indonesia is based on the urgent need to improve students' moral values, which have been degrading in the past few decades. Some studies have revealed about the causes of increasing decadent community not only in big urban living but also in rural areas. According to research done by Sudarsana (2016), the causes have largely been associated with the bad impact of pervasive development of technology, particularly electronic media, as well as permissive society. He also added that, lose control form parents and nearby community added to rapid access to information has led students experiencing major changes in moral values. Few negative values that are dominants related to behavior, ethics, manners, as well as emotional management. Truancy, for example, has been the case of the majority of students today. When they play truant they have a tendency of being involved in juvenile delinquency, which commonly exists among teenagers.

In order to anticipate this problem, it is very necessary for the government to foster character education at school. The enactment of character-based education may reduce the potential threat of moral degradation of students. Idris, et al. (2012) also acknowledged that education has an important role in shaping students' identity and personality. It means school along with teachers, in this case, play very important roles in nurturing the students and producing a good outcome. The school is also the place where students spend most of their time. However, Yaumi (2016) underlined that character education had, in fact, been addressed long before the implementation of Curriculum 2013. It had existed along with people recognize education and civilization. Nevertheless, it was not formulated in the form of formal education until the emergence of character-based education. Raka (2013) added that other significant factors of shaping students character from school are due to the urgent need of developing noble character community, resulting in developing the noble character of a nation and in the end realizing the advancement of the country. This will not be achieved unless the good quality of a nation is prepared from now, and it starts from school.

### **Market Place Activity as Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Shaping Students' Character**

It is reasonable to say that the way a teacher teaches and interacts with students can influence the students' behavior. Appropriate learning strategies will accentuate the engaging process of learning that in the end will result in students' improvement. To help this process run well, a teacher plays a significant role in the classroom. He/she unconsciously contribute to shaping students' character. Therefore in most of the situation a teacher should act as a mentor and facilitator who is able to foster self - learning in students. According to Smith, & Mac Gregor (1992) in collaborative learning, a teacher gives examples and challenging work with a clear goal, so students can develop their learning objectives. A teacher can create a teamwork atmosphere in the classroom and stimulate students to collaborate and cooperate with other students. Through these activities, students learn how to work in a team and value the group dynamics.

Market Place Activity (MPA) is a learning strategy that offers social interaction and practices negotiating skills, offering and accepting ideas and other communication skills, which resemble activities that are happening in the real market. Market Place Activity, later called MPA, put more emphasis on collaborative and cooperative strategies that a teacher can apply in the classroom. In the case of English learning context, it will not only boost the confidence and motivation of students to do but also stimulate the potential of moral value, as it relates to working with other people. Prihadi (2017) defines MPA as a learning strategy that resembles activities happening in the market. There are two types of groups, buyers and sellers. Buyer will visit information stall of sellers and buy information they provided. In this learning activity, students practice selling and buying or offering and accepting information from an information stall that sells a particular topic of information. Another group of students acting as buyers asks questions related to the topic. This activity will turn until all information stalls are visited.

During the process of buying and selling information, students practice positive values that improve the quality of their personality in terms of character as well as language proficiency. When Market Place Activity is implemented continuously for more than two years, it results in the positive changes in the way they socialize with other peers and appreciate other people ideas. In addition to that, confidence and self-assurance have also improved.

## **METHOD**

In the case of this best practice, it was applied to all students in the teacher's classes but only one particular class was to be documented as samples for the purpose of the research. Best practice on this subject had been done for more than two years, starting in August 2015 and ended in March 2018. Best practice was conducted on 30 students consisted of 10 males and 20 females. They were taken from one particular class who were the same students for those particular years and observed continuously through assessment rubrics, observation rubric, and surveys as well as personal interview. The main focus was on two aspects, the improvement of language proficiency and the development of positive character. The values that were observed related to self-assurance and confidence, responsibility, appreciation and respect differences as well as peer assisting in learning. Meanwhile, in terms of English language proficiency the skills that were assessed related to initiating and responding in a conversation and discussion, politeness in negotiating, offering, accepting and declining information based on the topics assigned to the students and finally overall performance when presenting or reporting a particular topic. Language proficiency assessment was done through speaking skills rubric assessment.

Regarding the MPA strategy itself, it was carried out continuously (even though not in every single schedule, but most of the time) in the classroom based on the following steps:

1. Students were divided into five groups consisting of five to six members in the group. Each group was given a topic /learning material of the day. At this phase, all students in the group worked together to discuss and collect all the information related to the assigned topic. When someone did not understand the topic other group members help him/her explain the material. It was obvious that students learned more from their friends' explanation rather than listened to the teacher's

- lecture. In addition, students were given flexibility in summarizing their materials. They made it on a big paper in the forms of a diagram, colored pictures or sketches. This also stimulated their creativity.
2. When all groups finished collecting information based on the time limit agreed together, the teacher divided each group of two or three students as buyers and the rest of the students as sellers. Sellers stayed in their original group waiting for visitors of other groups to come and bought the topic information from them. Meanwhile, buyers visited other groups to buy other topics information that their group did not have yet. At this stage, every group member was responsible for their job, as either sellers or buyers. Buyers were responsible to bring home as much information as possible while sellers were responsible to sell as much information as possible so they get more profit (i.e. score) from the transaction. In the process of a transaction between sellers and buyers, students practiced all language skills as described previously. Sellers might start a conversation by asking several questions that had been set up as guided questions such as; what topic do you have? What is the main information? What is the purpose of the material? What is the detail information? How important is the information related to the topic? How do you apply the topic in real life, etc. or buyers offered as interesting as possible so the sellers would buy their topic. They made sticky notes stated some amount of nominal to represent money for the transaction. They also bargained for the price of the information.
  3. After the selling and buying process accomplished (based on the time limit had been set beforehand) all sellers went back to their own group and told all the information they have collected from different groups. They helped each other explain the topic materials from a different group in turn. In other occasions of the following meeting, they displayed their information to the wall and sellers from other groups walked along the galleries to get the information. The transaction activity might vary from time to time to avoid the monotony.
  4. After the activities finished teacher distributed the rubric asking their engagement in the activities, how they felt when doing it, and what they have learned about the lesson.
  5. In the following meeting, the teacher gave them different rubric to do for peer assessment.
  6. Outside classroom learning, the teacher also did some personal approach with students and had personal interviews about the activities they did through MPA. Questions such as; what did you do when 'A' did not finish his/her part? How did you encourage 'B' to negotiate in the conversation? What did you tell 'C' or 'D' when they did not understand the instruction or the question? Other similar questions to dig up their thought asked them on different occasions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As this is a best practice the data collected through observation and document recording. This will be described qualitatively to elaborate on the result of the best practice after more than two years of implementation. The results showed significant differences in terms of students' positive habits. During the process of best practice, students were given certain rubrics in order to record their progress. In the period of first six months (August to February 2015/2016), there were no changes regarding their habits and values in relation to the aspects to be observed i.e. self-assurance and confidence, responsibility, appreciation and respect differences as well as peer assisting

in learning. They did not get used to new classroom tradition. The initiative of being responsible for the lesson and helped others in learning was not seen. They seemed to be reluctant to accept the classroom dynamics. Meanwhile, their speaking skills had slightly developed in offering and accepting or declining ideas, even though they ignored the matter of proper manner.

Based on the rubric documented, female students seemed to acknowledge instruction faster than males. At first, it was assumed because females outnumbered male students (20:10) which led to the ease of communication between same-sex students and absorbed information better. As the process went on, during the next three months (March to May 2016) a slight improvement existed with five male students. They addressed questions related to a certain topic with better confidence and were able to elaborate the answer without hesitation. In the same period, some students both males and females' character values were also developing fairly in the aspects of responsibility as well as in respecting and appreciating the differences. They seemed to tolerate with other people if they faced disapproval faces among friends, and accepted what other friends suggested. At the beginning of the best practice, they would not work well in a team when they found something unhappy about the idea.

As this best practice was a longitudinal process, the transformation took quite a while. From August 2017 until the following months (as of June to July the school had ineffective learning hours and best practice was also was not fully active), the students showed constant progress on how they communicated with other people. Most of them looked more confident and were very relaxed when communicating in English, even not during the learning session. They tried to initiate a conversation with teachers and responded to teachers questions with an extended answer. Interestingly when during the learning process in the classroom (January to April 2017) 28 students out of 30 had shown great peer assisting in leaning. When they were in group work and completed the project the teacher assigned, they deliberately helped other group members who did not understand the materials of the day. They even directed and motivated other friends who were reluctant to speak and engaged them in an active discussion. For information, the student samples on the study were from different levels of family background and different levels of knowledge as well. Before this best practice done, it was very noticeable that they would only make friends and work together with those whom they feel had the same taste and style. However, in the final year of their best practice around January until March 2018, the significant changes occurred and they got along well with everyone in the classroom.

Based on the responses of the students from personal interview, the teacher asked about the progress they had, they said because they got used to working collaboratively and cooperatively in the group. In addition, they also told that the intensity of their collaboration had made them know each other well. They learned to appreciate and respect other ideas. Outside the classroom, they also added that they had applied the values that they practiced in classroom learning. In the dormitory, for example, they were able to tolerate their roommates and appreciate what they had and did. A warm welcome to diversity in interest, passion, family as well as the level of knowledge had led to a more comfortable atmosphere in the dormitory. That was how they acknowledged.

Corresponding to the improvement of language skills, their progress had respectively increased. During group presentation, they were able to speak confidently with positive self-assurance. They also naturally distributed their turn when giving a talk. The way most students asked and responded to question was improving in terms of politeness and manner. Utterances such as 'sorry', 'please', 'thank you' as well as other adjectives for compliment and appreciation were heard frequently.

## CONCLUSIONS

In line with the result that had been achieved either in shaping character or in language proficiency, teaching process in the classroom was subject to revising. There had been some positive changes towards the students in these particular classes needed to be shared with other teachers and other subjects as well. During the long process of study, there were learning values to be adopted particularly related to a collaborative and cooperative approach. How these approaches were very flexible for modification, adjustment and were applicable in any classroom atmospheres.

Regarding the character building, Market Place Activity had been a very successful strategy and made students develop positive values not only in their social interaction but also in improving their language proficiency. Within the two years period, many constraints had happened in terms of duration, since sometimes classroom teaching was distracted with school events and holidays. Besides, the controlling and observing schedule was also another barrier in the case of the teacher sometimes being outstation and substitute teacher replaced the class. Finally, apart from this limitation, this best practice had largely contributed to shaping students' character and improving their capacity in using the English language.

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