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Students' Reaction Towards Nation Characters Education and the Impacts on the Practice of Nationalist Characters

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore students' reactions on the implementation of Nation Characters Education to inculcate nationalist characters in high schools of Pekanbaru district, Riau, Indonesia. The study focused on students' reactions and their acceptance towards the nationalist elements inculcated by teachers in the classrooms, school programs and co-curriculum activities. This research involved 836 students from 22 secondary schools of Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia. Data was analyzed by conducting descriptive analysis of the mean and percentage, whereas inferential analysis was done through MANOVA and SEM. The study found that students' reaction on the implementation of Nation Characters Education particularly the nationalist elements showed significant differences based on gender. The results also indicated a good level of reactions towards the implementation in the classrooms, school environment and extra-curricular activities. The findings also showed that there was a significant contribution of the National Character Education particularly the elements of the nationalist characters in strengthening nation building. The implications of the study found character and identity buildings among students need practices and proper guidance from teachers to internalize them as a self-image. This finding reveals the importance of integrated and holistic implementation of Nation Character Education across curriculum, through school programs and co-curricular activities.

Key words: Reaction towards the implementation of Nation Character Education, the implementation of the nationalist character, students, classrooms, school environment and curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has created a new phenomenon in disseminating information and cultures, making it as the new major threat to the younger generation. This is due to the effects of wide and foreign cultures which are very much the opposite attracts of the solemn Eastern customs and values. It is inevitable that the new upbeat influence has affected the identity and values of the current y and millennium generation. Sadly, foreign elements have dominated, influenced and changed the attitudes and minds of the youth particularly regarding socio cultures which consequently modify their characteristics. The new phenomenon is alarming, hence,

becoming a major concern on the adult society especially the parents. The social changes are very significant especially in terms of language, dressing, fashion styles, etiquettes, relationships and their nationalism as well as patriotism.

The concern was taken seriously as it was then manifested by the Indonesian Education and Cultural Department through the introduction of Nation Characters Education (PKB). The purpose of the new subject introduced was to counter attack and shield the younger generation from the threatening spread of westernized cultures. The new subject was implemented across curriculum and was designed to be easily embedded in any school environment, whether in formal classroom activities, school programs or co-curricular activities.

School is a significant agent to inculcate values and the best platform for children to build their personal strengths and identities. Hence, the introduction of the new education across school curriculum is the best decision in promoting and fostering nationalism and to create awareness among the children towards their own nation. The main reason is to produce patriotic citizens. According to the Indonesian Education and Cultural Minister (Sudrajat, 2011) character education is crucial as it is the best educational platform, not only for the purpose of having intelligent minds but to build manners and moral values that would strengthen one's identity.

Hedonism and self-indulgence have influenced the young people to adapt themselves with vast information and depending more on the internet, rather than working for the purpose to increase their thinking capacity and for social maturity (Widodo and Kadarwati, 2013). Hence, as a formal institution, the school is seen as a significant venue to rectify this situation. The nation somehow has put the importance of the school to reform the younger generation. The National Character Education is introduced in schools through its formal environment especially through classroom teaching and learning sessions, formal school programs and co-curricular activities. According to Sudrajat and Wibowo (2013), those three aspects of schools' environments and the contents are the solid basis for character building and disseminating of positive values to protect students from the influence of globalization and foreign threats. According to Agus (2012) school children have only around 7 h of educational contacts per day or less than 30% in school, the other 70% of their time is being educated by the family members at home. However, based on surveys, children are more effectively influenced by the school, which helps to develop their personalities.

Soedarsono (2009) defined characters as a set of moral values and norms owned by the society, which work as guidelines in the dimension of thinking, attitudes, behaviors and actions to shape a solid character of an individual by embedding his personal values with the available values of his or her social environment. Thus, characters could be said as moral values which determine self-esteem and dignity of an individual.

Therefore, moral behavior is the benchmark in describing the characteristic of an individual or a nation, either bad or good. This character is a reflection of national identity and cultural heritage that is treasured or preserved as a vital part of life. A charismatic individual is commonly seen based on his behaviors which having meet his religious and common moral values, consequently he reflects the moral and values of his own society. According to Lickona (2008) a good character is desired by all. It is developed from three interconnected dimensions, moral knowledge, moral feelings and behaviors. These three dimensions build a good character by knowing about rightness, needing it and encourage one to perform only the good things (in terms of thinking, feeling and actions).

According to Sumaatmadja (2002) people are different based on the environment in which they are located. Anyone who stationed himself in an environment and education that help him to move towards good paths, then he is more likely to be a good person and vice versa. However, Omar (1999) relates a strong character with its good deeds particularly they involve psychological elements. Raka (2007) directly relates character strength with psychological elements. Hence, mature man will usually show a consistent and stable character. Thus, a mature individual naturally would show a consistent character.

The concept of character education is the efforts to bring people back to the nature of why humans are created, that should naturally move people towards the good, protecting self-dignity and uphold the values of truth and righteous. Naturally, humans tend to accept the good and reject the bad. Thus, the Indonesian Blue Print for Character Education in 2010 has considered the steps to disseminate moral values to civilize the people and consciously practice them to strengthen positive personalities of the nation. In other words, the concepts provided in the blue print are practical and doable. It is a moral call for the people to practice good moral behaviors and to be good in life.

Findings of a study conducted by Ruyadi (2010) revealed that character education will be more effective if it is based on the students' local culture and background. In this case, the process of cultural heredity is crucial in shaping the character of a nation through the process of institutionalization, socialization, internalization and acculturation. Sumaatmadja (2002) recognized the relationship between education with the process of acculturation in building and shaping the character of the nation. It is shown in Fig. 1 where the research framework which particularly focusing on the practices of nationalist characters:

According to The Law of the Republic of Indonesia (No. 20: 2003) regarding the national education (Indonesian Law), it is stated that the functions and objectives of national education are to develop and empower people. It is stated in Item No. 3 of the Law (Indonesian Law) that "The functions of national education is develop and build national character as a civilize and dignify nation as well as educating the people to become religious, pious, well-behaved, healthy, knowledgeable, creative, self-managing (independent), democratic and responsible".

The Nation Character Education is specially designed for the school children based on the religious values, the principles of *Pancasila*, cultural values and with the purpose to define individual qualities as one great Indonesian people. The four sources of education are developed into 18 indicators of national values, there are shown in Table 1.

The Education and Cultural Department had published The Indonesian Blue Print for Character Education in 2010 which contains 18 character values to be applied in character education in schools as discussed above. Due to that, the

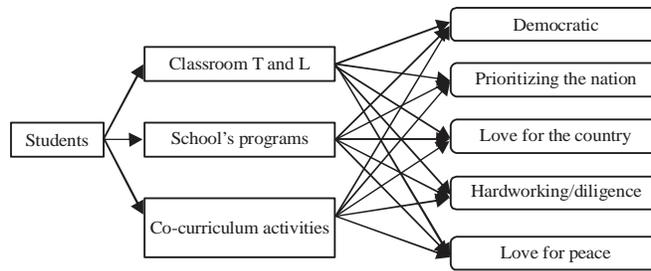


Fig. 1: Research framework

Table 1: Values of national characters

Values	Descriptors
Religious	Pious attitudes and behaviors observed in the performance of religious beliefs, tolerant towards other religious practices and beliefs and live peacefully with other people of different beliefs and religions
Honesty	Behaviors which are based on the efforts to make oneself as honest and trustworthy in speech, actions and occupation
Tolerance	Attitudes and actions of accepting differences in religious, tribes, ethnic, opinions, attitudes and actions of other people who are different from himself
Discipline	Actions that show well-manners and compliant to certain rules and protocol
Diligence	Earnestly overcoming all learning and working threats and diligently completes any task given appropriately
Creative	Able to think creatively and innovative to produce new patterns or outcomes
Independent	Independent and self-resourceful in completing any task
Democratic	Democratic in thinking, attitudes, actions and evaluating his own and other people's rights and responsibilities
Curiosity	Curious to know more and broaden the information learned, seen and heard
Patriotic	In way of thinking, actions and visions which put the nation first instead of personal needs
Love for the country	Ways of thinking, attitudes and actions show loyalty, caring and highly appreciating the language, physical environment, social, culture, economic and race politic
Appreciating performance	Attitudes and actions that lead and encourage oneself to produce something useful for the society, recognize and honor the success of others
Friendly and communicative	Actions that demonstrate a sense of being comfortable to interact and collaborate with others
Love for peace	Attitudes, words and actions that cause others to feel happy of one's presence and comfortable to be with
Reading culture	Habitual activity in making time to read a variety of reading materials that serve as a source of knowledge
Sensitive to the surrounding and environment	Taking efforts, attitudes and actions to avoid causing any damage to the natural environment, the surrounding and taking efforts to improve the environmental damage
Social sensitivity	Having the attitudes and actions that always want to help other people and society in need
Responsible	Attitudes and behavior of a person to perform his duties and obligations, for himself, the society, environment, country and God

researcher has grouped these values into four sets of characters: (1) Religious character is the application of religious values to build students' personality, (2) Nationalist character is to mould Indonesians to fully embrace the spirit of Pancasila, (3) Productive character is to develop students to be more productive, progressive and communicative learners and (4) Creative character is to encourage students to be creative, rational, thoughtful and innovative learners.

This study aimed to review students' reactions on the implementation of Nation Character Education (NCE) in schools implemented in classroom teaching and learning, integrated in school programs and co-curriculum activities. The implementation is to boost the spirit of nationalism among students. The researcher aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- The level of students acceptance towards the implementation of Nation Character Education (NCE) implemented in classroom teaching and learning, integrated in school programs and co-curriculum activities

- To determine any significant difference of acceptance towards the implementation of Nation Character Education (NCE) implemented in classroom teaching and learning, integrated in school programs and co-curriculum activities based on gender
- To determine the contribution of students' acceptance towards the implementation of Nation Character Education (NCE) on the students' characteristics particularly in the aspects of democratic, love for the country, diligence and love for peace

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The survey method was used in this study to analyze students' acceptance towards the implementation of Nation Character Education which involved the element of nationalist characteristics through classroom teachings, school programs and co-curriculum activities as the media of this study. The participants were 836 students from 22 secondary schools (SMP) in Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia. The sample

was selected based on Taylor and Bogdan (1984) and Seidman (1998) who suggested four main criteria in determining sample for a research. The participants of this study were selected through a systematic random sampling method. Questionnaire was the main instrument used in this research. It was designed to answer the research questions and the items of the questionnaire were built based on the Character of Nations Theory developed by Lickona (1996) and Kilpatrick (1992) and also adapted from the questionnaire designed by Ruyadi (2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of students' acceptance on the Nation Character Education (NCE): The NCE is implemented across the curriculum and embedded in the school's program, classroom teaching and learning and integrated in the co-curriculum activities. Findings showed the overall level of students' acceptance as moderate at 3.29. This is in line with the mean score interpretation interpreted by Ahmad (2002) and Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) in Table 2.

Generally, the highest level of students' acceptance was on the aspects of cooperation, changes of behaviors and absorbing those values during classroom teachings. This is because in the classroom contacts, teacher could control and focus on students' formal interactions, compared with the implementation through school programs and co-curricular activities, which involved a large number of students. The result is shown in Table 3.

Based on Table 3, the level of students' acceptance on the implementation of Character Education in the classroom was high, with female students showed higher acceptance compared to male students. This trend indicates that female students were more diligent in the classroom learning process and it is easier to disseminate the values due to controllable learning climate and the students are easily monitored by teachers. In addition, it is easier to integrate with other subjects. Consequently, students are more focused

and their behaviors are easily changed in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

Hence, it can be concluded that classrooms are effective infrastructures to disseminate values and to build students' personalities. The rationales are:

- The lessons involve careful plans and application of various methods and learning aids
- Students are more focused on the explanation or activities executed in the class. Thus, it is more effective in building up nationalist characters among students
- The elements of Nation Character Education are delivered in a systematic way which enables teachers to guide students and gain their cooperation particularly in strengthening their values and enhance their love for the country
- The differences of students acceptance towards Nation Character Education

Results of MANOVA analysis showed a significant difference of students' acceptance towards the implementation of Nation Character Education (NCE) in schools implemented in classroom teaching and learning, integrated in school programs and co-curriculum activities. The differences are shown in Table 4.

Results of MANOVA analysis showed that female students accepted the implementation of nationalist character better than male students. This finding is parallel with the result found by Ahmad *et al.* (2013), that there was a significant relationship between the stimuli from the learning environment with academic achievement. In fact, students showed a better performance in a controlled and closed surrounding when compared to a more open environment especially in enhancing good character building.

Based on careful reviews on the implementation and inculcation of the nationalist character values, it was found that students showed moderate level of acceptance during formal interventions for examples during flag-raising ceremony, motivational talks and formal workshops organized by the school. This is due to the fact that students are more excited to be involved in such programs when they are implemented in a more relaxing manner and the values are naturally disseminated and practiced unconsciously. Positive characters such as being more religious, nationalistic, creative and productive are easier to inculcate when they are efficiently embedded in a more educative dimension. The result would be more effective when the values are delivered through a well-planned module, rather than through ad-hoc or co-curricular activities. This is because, students are more focused and it would be easier to follow all the steps taken by the teacher when they are taught in a comfortable compound. When they are released into the field or given freedom in the

Table 2: Interpretation of the mean score

Scale range	Interpretation
1.00-2.33	Low
2.34-3.67	Moderate
3.68-5.00	High

Table 3: Students' acceptance towards the Nation Character Education

Acceptance	N	Mean
Implementation in the classroom		
Male	341	3.84
Female	495	3.88
Implementation in the school environment		
Male	341	2.89
Female	495	2.99
Implementation in co-curriculum activities		
Male	341	3.05
Female	495	3.11

Table 4: Students' acceptance based on gender

Acceptance and gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Type III sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	F-value	Significance
Classroom								
Male	341	3.84	0.501	0.301	1	0.301	1.298	0.255
Female	495	3.88	0.467					
School programs								
Male	341	2.89	0.422	1.771	1	1.771	11.767	0.001
Female	495	2.99	0.363					
Co-curriculum								
Male	341	3.05	0.419	0.830	1	0.830	5.428	0.020
Female	495	3.11	0.371					

Table 5: Acceptance towards the Implementation of Nation Character Education based on gender

Implementation of NCE and gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Type III sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	F-value	Significance
Democratic								
Male	341	3.39	0.429	0.087	1	0.087	0.530	0.467
Female	495	3.41	0.388					
Prioritizing the nation								
Male	341	4.25	0.435	0.126	1	0.126	0.670	0.413
Female	495	4.28	0.431					
Love for the country								
Male	341	4.28	0.431	0.035	1	0.035	0.184	0.668
Female	495	4.27	0.437					
Diligence and hard working								
Male	341	2.79	0.471	1.449	1	1.449	6.843	0.009
Female	495	2.88	0.452					
Love for peace								
Male	341	3.90	0.492	0.379	1	0.379	1.780	0.183
Female	495	3.94	0.439					

NCE: Nation character education

open area of the school compound, they are more likely to be less controlled, thus more exciting and attractive programs are required in order to increase their awareness and to get their cooperation.

Practices of nationalist characters based on gender: The findings of the study have found a significant difference of students' acceptance on the implementation of Nation Character Education based on gender. This study showed a gender difference that the way female students accepted the implementation was different than the male students in all of the three media of values and characters building. In the context of this study, female students were found to have better acceptance when compared to male students. The result is shown in the following Table 5.

Based on the five aspects of the nationalist characters studied, female students were more open over male students in terms of their attitudes and in reflecting their nationalist characters. Female students were more open when discussing politics and the Government, they were more enthusiastic, hardworking and love for peace. However, in the context of love for the country, male students showed slightly higher than female students with a matter of 1 point. Students expressed their love for the country when they stood up proudly and energetically sang the national anthem Indonesia Raya during the Sang Saka Merah Putih flag raising ceremony. When in the classroom, they were actively involved and curious to get information related to the nation history and stayed abreast with the current situations happening in the whole country.

It is not easy to shape students' characters and personalities especially with the local values. However, it is attainable as long as teachers uphold their roles as the agents of socialization and disseminate good values through various elements across the formal curriculum, school programs and integrated the values with the co-curriculum activities. The values can be cleverly embedded during the weekly (every Wednesday) uniform bodies, clubs and sports meetings. These three environments are the best platforms to inculcate good moral values to help students develop great personalities through formal and informal learning contexts.

One of the important aspects of education clearly stated in the National Philosophy of Education, is to develop pious individuals. Hence, it is important to inculcate good moral values in order to produce great mankind. Therefore, education and inculcation of values are inseparable. Education would be meaningless and incomplete without the teaching of moral values (Kasa *et al.*, 1996, 1994). These values shape and guide individuals on how to behave, their thinking and actions, as a result, determine the culture or norms of one's society.

School is an agent of social and culture, it is also the catalyst of change. Thus, it is inevitable for the school to keep on advancing in order to develop a sustainable generation against external challenges and threats. The school is a great platform to strengthen the Indonesians to be in line with the *Pancasila* philosophy and the National Education Philosophy itself. Noble values can be inculcated formally and informally.

Community and family members play an important role in fostering positive individuals informally. However, the adoption of these values will be more focused if they are delivered through a formal, clear and structured education system (Rukiyati *et al.*, 2013). According to Wan and Zahid (1993), matters regarding the application of moral values should be carefully planned and discussed when designing the curriculum for the secondary level, especially for the purpose of producing strong and devout future children. This goal will only be achieved if the children are taught to appreciate the moral values for the purpose of developing the school children to have strong characters and great personalities. The values are best embedded unconsciously across the curriculum. In the Republic of Indonesia, the Nation Character Education is introduced to develop and boost the appreciation of moral values by strengthening students' characters across the curriculum.

Nation characters education through learning environment: Structural Equation Model (SEM) was conducted to investigate the contribution of Nation Characters Education towards each aspect of developing nationalist characters. It is shown in Fig. 2.

The SEM analysis was conducted and the result showed that students' acceptance was positive towards the implementation of Nation Character Education. The SEM analysis also showed that students' acceptance contributed to the development of nationalist characters in terms of five significant aspects namely democratic, prioritizing the nation, love for the country, diligence and love for peace. Results of the path analysis Structural Equation Model (SEM) showed that the regression model used was suitable, where the acceptance of the character implemented in the classroom was a significant predictor variable for other variables; democratic, prioritizing the nation and diligence. Whereas, classroom was not a predictor for the aspect of love for the country ($\beta = 0.04, p > 0.05$) and love for peace ($\beta = 0.01, p > 0.05$).

In addition, acceptance towards the implementation of Nation Character Education through school programs was a significant predictor for the variables; democratic, prioritizing the nation, love the country; diligence and love for peace.

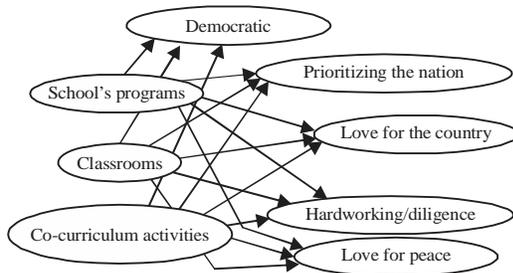


Fig. 2: SEM analysis on classrooms and the aspects of nationalist characters

Furthermore, the acceptance towards the implementation of nationalist character during the co-curriculum activities was also a significant predictor for the variables; democratic; prioritizing the nation, love for the country; diligence and love for peace ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.05$). Generally, it can be concluded that students' acceptance of the implementation contributed significantly towards the implementation of the nationalist characters. Students were able to accept the new methods of education embedded by the teachers to develop great nationalist characters among the students through the three appropriate media.

Results showed a significant difference of acceptance between male and female students towards the implementation of Nation Character Education. Students' acceptance often depends on the first impression performed by the teachers. Effective and enthusiastic teachers would receive positive responses from their students. This often works in the classroom environment particularly during the teaching and learning session, however, the functions and effectiveness would be affected when both the teacher and students are in a wider and uncontrolled environment, for instance during the co-curriculum activities. It is proven by this research as students' acceptance of the Nation Character Education was high when it was implemented in the classroom. However, the acceptance was only moderate when the NCE was integrated with the school programs and co-curriculum activities. Co-curriculum is very essential in education (Abdullah, 2011; Hopen, 2002). Hence, co-curriculum should be implemented seriously and systematically. It also requires solid supports from all parties, in order to become an effective platform to strengthen physical development as well as to enhance students' identities and personalities.

Students' level of acceptance towards the implementation of Nation Character Education in the classroom was satisfactory and positive. This can be concluded that students are able to accept the concepts used by the teachers in disseminating and inculcating values through effective programs and various co-curriculum activities, whether through games, sports, academics clubs, societies or uniformed bodies.

Based on the findings, it was also found a significant difference of students' acceptance on the implementation based on the environment, particularly in a broad school environment and co-curricular activities. In the context of acceptance based on environment, students' acceptance did not show any significant difference of acceptance when the NCB was implemented in the classrooms. It might be due to the fact that in the classroom, both male and female students were fully under controlled by the subject teacher, all students received information uniformly as teacher delivered the information based on modules and syllabus.

Students' acceptance showed mixed responds on the aspect of acculturation of values to develop students' characters through school programs. Their responses were in

the range of extremely positive, positive and low. High acceptance was found through the culture or practice of smiling, greetings and salutations within the school compound. Thus, through the implementation of school rules, putting the importance of early arrival to the school and school programs could positively nourish positive values.

All of those items were very well accepted and implemented by the students and they were accepted as rules to be adhered to and as a way of life. This means the schools have successfully implemented the culture. It has also raised the school's image in the eyes of outsiders and visitors who come to visit the school seeing the culture of friendliness, greetings and salutation being cultivated and practiced by the entire school community, especially by the students themselves.

According to Yusof (2008), culture refers to the values, attitudes, beliefs, actions, behaviors and customs which are equally practiced by the whole members of an organization. The quality of a culture is naturally interconnected with other elements such as work ethics, technology, organizational structure, business strategies and financial decisions (Ehlers, 2009).

Both male and female students strongly agreed and accepted teachers' approaches in promoting positive values through co-curricular activities, such as starting an activity with a prayer and co-curriculum activities were essential in strengthening students' friendship and camaraderie. The same finding was also found by a study carried out by Lian *et al.* (2005), which recognized the importance of co-curriculum activities in promoting and developing cooperation and kinship among students while building and shaping individual's unique identity. Co-curriculum activities provide opportunity for the students to interact with their peers and instructors or teachers. At the same time they learn how to communicate well and listen for specific information. This is supported by Awang *et al.* (2013) that the school environment can be considered as the dominant factor in building the positive attitudes among the students.

Co-curricular activities also build students' communicative skills and the skills are likely to be great potentials in helping students with their future careers. Participation in co-curricular activities also provides great opportunities for students to develop their potential, talents and abilities. This is consistent with the study conducted by Hopen (2002) who found a relationship between students' involvement in co-curricular activities with the development of their natural talents and abilities.

Students were found to have positive attitude and high nationalist character. In fact, students scored very high values on some elements (characteristics). Students demonstrated that they were unselfish by putting the nation as their main priority in any situation and they were very patriotic. This is the impact of the efforts taken by teachers in promoting the nationalist spirit in students through classroom teaching, school

environment and co-curriculum activities. However, students' democratic attitude was still moderate as some students were still hesitant when asked to give their opinions about certain issues; students were still trying to adapt themselves with the changes in the environment and learn to accept others' views positively.

The findings showed that students were highly aware of acceptable behaviors as Indonesians, by conducting behaviors appropriately as stated in the five principles of Pancasila, striving to learn about the diversity of Indonesian cultures from various regions and districts, by highlighting local cultural activities and programs in school. The students were also willing to sacrifice themselves to defend the homeland. They were also unselfish and would regard the nation as their main priority above their personal interests.

Students really love the country. It is proven in their behaviors and actions, such as they stood up and enthusiastically sang the national anthem Indonesia Raya, they were angry at those trying to insult the people of Indonesia, they were proud of the Indonesian local products, ready to defend the nation from external threats, willing to contribute helps when the country is hit by the disaster.

The culture of hard working and diligence however is not significantly practiced by the students. Even though, the research has found that students realized it is important for them to successfully accomplish certain tasks or assignments. They were willing to collaborate and were also openly ready to accept new task. However it was found that some students procrastinated and did not refer to relevant sources of information in completing their task or assignment. These two attitudes were the challenges and personal threats to the students in performing their tasks. Apart from that, students rejected prejudice and tried to live peacefully and harmoniously as well as to have many friends. Both of these aspects were recorded very high, whereas the level of their response was recorded moderate for the aspect of preserving peace of the neighborhood and not easily influenced by foreign culture.

CONCLUSION

School culture is the basis for an individual to experience behavioral changes through routines and habits practiced by the whole community of the school compound. Acculturation is a process developed through sustainable practice of acceptable positive values. It is a long-term process. New characters are developed through training, conditioning and modeling in the context of social interaction in the school. Naturally, students subconsciously learn by hearing, feeling and practicing, it is indeed a learning process especially on how to build characters and behaviors. Acculturation of values in schools can be implemented in various ways; particularly it depends on the leader and his leadership styles as well as teachers' creativity. Even though the strategies taken by

schools would be different, but there are universal and common practices such as the requirements for the school children to arrive early, to greet each other, upon meeting someone and the teachers once they are in the school compound.

The acculturation process of nationalist characters in students is supported by the basic values practiced in the family. The values then reinforced in school through classroom environment, school environment and naturally during co-curriculum activities. However, there are external challenges from the community which stand as major constraints and obstacles. If the external challenges are more dominant and persistent, then it is more likely for the students to be easily attracted to the external influence.

IMPLICATIONS

In general, this study provides a clear indication of students' acceptance towards the implementation of Nationalist Character Education in schools and its impact in developing nationalist characters among students. There are five constructs of nationalist characters, namely democratic, prioritizing the nation, love for the country, diligence and love for peace. The efforts of developing these constructs would provide valuable inputs for other researchers to further study the subject and restructure the constructs.

Classroom is the most effective medium to inculcate the elements of nation characters. This is because here in the classroom compound, students are gathered in an educative surrounding, their interaction would be controlled and they are free to realize their potentials. Effective teachers are instructional leaders who are able to develop students' characters and personalities across the formal curriculum. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to disseminate the values in an easy manner, interesting, stimulating and fun through the use of various methods and multiple teaching aids.

Teachers need continuous exposure through consistent in-service trainings to improve their competencies and knowledge in order to create effective teaching and learning environment. Promoting values to build students' characters would be naturally done if teachers are able to bridge their relationship with the students. Bridging the gap will improve teachers' capabilities and it would be easier to inculcate values and good characters through effective role-modeling. They should creatively design their teaching materials to be easily digested and understood by students. Abstract materials should be simplified appropriately through relevant examples.

On the other hand, school programs should be organized effectively, probably through co-curriculum activities. Informal approach should be utilized optimally to enhance students' appreciation and practice of the nationalist characters for instance through the venues of dramas, pantomimes and poetry recitations. This is one of the ways to enhance the spirit of love for the country, love for peace and the nation.

However, students' participation should be encouraged and given appropriate incentives to build up their nationalist characters and great personalities.

Another way co-curriculum activities can promote patriotism among students is through competitions such as marching, parade and other activities designed for uniform bodies. Such activities train students to be brave and ever ready in facing any situation as well as enhancing their love for the country.

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