
Developing Students' Social Skills Using Textbooks with Character Content in the Social Studies Learning in Indonesia

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Abstract

This research was designed to develop social skills-based learning models in Junior High Schools in Bandung, Indonesia through the use of social studies text books with character education content. In this research, the researcher used social studies text books that the researcher had written or made. Students' social skills that were regarded as a part of character education were the main focus of this research. The social studies text books with character education content in junior high school were regarded as teaching aids in developing students' social skills in the research site. Social studies text books used by social studies teachers in this research that used qualitative approach with emancipatory action research were expected as the produced learning models. This research was aimed at answering these questions: How do social studies teachers in junior high schools in Bandung, Indonesia design, implement, and reflect their teaching and learning using social studies text books with character education content in order to develop students' social skills? and how junior high school students reflect their social skills after engaging in the social studies teaching and learning by using social studies text books with character education content?. This research had successfully trained junior high school students' social skills in interacting with others including foreigners and also in greeting others with politeness, tolerant, and empathy aspects or features.

Background

This research was based on the motivation of the researcher as a lecturer at the social studies study program, Indonesia University of Education who has been teaching Social Skills Development to do a research on social

skills development of junior high school students through the use of social studies text books for junior high school students with character education content. During the courses, the researcher was faced with some problems that needed a solution in the form of research. These problems are as followings.

Firstly, in the beginning of the Social Skills Development course, it was found that most of the students of the social studies study program have known the concept of social skills. However, they faced some problems when they were asked to implement that concept. Preliminary study also showed that those students often performed their daily life without the elements of social skills. This could be seen by the use of inappropriate words when communicating with others although they have known that good communication skills are a part of social skills. Regarding this, the researcher believed that the absence of social skills of the social studies study program students was caused by the teaching and learning atmosphere in the primary and secondary level of education in Bandung, Indonesia that emphasized more on intellectual aspects and not on character and social skills. Therefore, character education development in primary and secondary education including the use of text books with character education content is a foundation for students to continue their study to a higher level of education (Kohler, et al, 2011).

Secondly, from students' practicum report as a part of the course of junior high school social studies text books, it was found that most social studies text books in junior high schools did not have character education elements although these books are important learning sources in facilitating students' affection aspects, including democracy character, hard working, caring toward others, caring toward the environment and many others. The researcher assumed that to develop character education in junior high school, suitable books that contained those elements and social studies teachers' ability to use and develop learning materials were needed.

Thirdly, from the observational report of graduate students of the Indonesia University of Education who took the course of analyzing social studies learning practices in secondary education, it was found that most teachers in junior high schools were still emphasizing on cognitive or intellectual aspect in developing their teaching and learning materials, while affective and psychomotor aspects were neglected. As a result, character education elements were not properly developed. Thus, a situation where many junior high school students who gained good grades was regarded not reflecting a comprehensive learning outcomes because it only assessed a part of many assessment elements. Regarding this, the researcher took a conclusion that to develop character education in junior high school, not only cognitive

aspect but also affective and psychomotor were needed to be developed which was in line with Lickona's (1991) conception that character development should cover moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In line with the previous explanation, based on the researcher's observation as a supervisor of the social studies teaching practice in junior high schools, it was found that junior high school teachers taught more on moral knowing such as definition regarding caring toward the environment and did not develop skills related to caring toward the environment as a part of moral action. Hence, research focusing on character development that included text books with character education content (van Dijk, 2011) was urgent.

Moreover, as a writer of the social studies text books for junior high school (Nana Supriatna, 2010, Grafindo Media Pratama Press, Bandung), the researcher often faced with these following questions: (1) Do the targeted readers understand the content of the text books?, (2) Are the social studies teachers able to use the text books properly as what the writer expected?, (3) Do the text books help teachers in developing social studies teaching and learning in schools?, and (4) can the use of social studies text books develop a learning models that contained character in social studies?. These questions encouraged the researcher to do a research in schools using the researcher's book and to answer the previously mentioned questions. The research was conducted collaboratively as proposed by Johnsons in 2000 between the researcher as a lecturer and a writer with a social studies teacher in junior high school and a few students of the social studies education study program. In conjunction with the previous elaboration, this research also used qualitative approach through classroom actions research method as proposed by Hopkins in 1986 and Wiriadmadja in 2002 and the development as proposed by Cresswel in 2008 was expected to produce a social studies learning model in developing junior high school students social skills through the use of social studies text book with character education content.

Lastly, the researcher observed that teachers in junior high schools taught differently from the teaching guideline as stated in the social studies books written by the researcher. This situation motivated the researcher to act, tell, teach and give example on how to suitably use the book in the classroom. This gap encouraged the researcher to collaborate with a junior high school teacher in conduction a classroom action research. The researcher believed that one of the best ways to bridge the theories with practices was through the collaboration between the researcher as a pedagogy lecturer with the teacher in junior high school. This collaborative classroom action research equally placed the researcher, teacher and students in developing social studies learning

models by using the text books with character education content written by the researcher in the classroom action research. Praxis or relation between theories and practices could be developed through classroom action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 17, 33-34). Hence, this research would produce a learning model in developing students' social skills through the use of text books with character education content developed by the researcher, teacher and students in social studies learning in junior high school or research site.

Research Method

This research was qualitative in nature using emancipatory action research as proposed by Kemmis and Taggart in 2011. This research was implemented collaboratively between the researcher with a social studies teacher who was guiding and supervising a teaching practicum in social studies lesson. Emancipatory action research was conducted in three cycles. The first cycle was developing interspaces connectivity in the VII grade focusing on disaster mitigation and social skills related to mitigation. The second cycle dealt with simulation, and the third cycle dealt with social skill practices regarding demography in the same class and semester.

Research Reflection

The initiation of the nation cultural character by the Indonesian President in the National Education Day is celebrated on May 20, 2011 in Jakarta, the implementation and try out of the 2013 Curriculum that contain character education (specifically the first and second main competence) and Joko Widodo's motto "mentality revolution" are regarded as the government political will to develop an advance society in the future. This policy was based by many issues faced by this country in the form of dishonesty, inappropriate use of power, intergroup conflicts, chauvinism, etc that were also reflected in the learning process in schools. The development of social skills using social studies text books with character education in this research was considered as an effort in supporting the government policy and to overcome the nation's problems that included problems in schools such as unhealthy schools' environment, low social skills and the inability of social studies teachers in developing contextual teaching and learning.

Furthermore, schools as the place to educate and to prepare future generation needed to develop values and good attitudes on students that were reflected in the form of religiosity, honesty, discipline, hard working, creativity, independency, and many others. These aspects were not fully attached in the teaching and learning in schools including junior high schools

through social studies lesson. The schools' curriculum structure in the form of the 2013 Curriculum that implemented the minimum achievement criteria, commonly known as kriteria ketuntasan minimal (KKM), focused more on knowledge comprehension. To achieve these minimum criteria, students were trained to answer questions in exams and passing the exams was considered more important than the learning process. As a result, important aspects such as honesty, religiosity, hard work, creativity, independency, and responsibility were neglected. From this research, it could be concluded that assessment or scoring should not only be focused on the end result but also the teaching and learning process as stated in the 2013 Curriculum. The teacher who performed in this research had incorporated disaster mitigation social skills elements and social skills in family life when teaching interspaces connectivity and demography. Social skills in family and practices in helping societies that faced problems as they were developed in the first cycle were regarded as the first step in preparing students to have character and social skills.

Moreover, to develop character education of the nation's culture in schools, specifically social skills, an academic atmosphere was needed in the form of curriculum that was able to facilitate issues in schools, to provide leadership, to generate trust, and to provide facilities and infrastructure. Character education and social skills education in schools which were defined as education that put forward character, attitude, behavior, religiosity and skills of students had to come from issues that students have been facing in their daily life. Therefore, those problems could be raised as a part of the learning materials and reviewed in all lessons both disciplinary and interdisciplinary that also included social studies lesson in junior high schools. Character education could not stand as a single lesson as it would burden students. Character education should be in the content of all lessons and character elements that were enhanced by the text books and social skills practices (disaster mitigation) and social interaction in families were included in this research. The research results showed that students felt that social studies lesson was not only a lesson that focused on knowledge but also on character and trained students with social skills that could be implemented at home or in the society.

Text books that were made by the government in collaboration with other writers that referred the 2013 Curriculum had to be enriched by teachers based on their schools' situation. For example, green living character as one of the 18 character education of the nation's culture could be developed in all basic competences of the social studies lesson. Issues of the lack of societies' awareness toward the environment or the lack of petrol could be brought as learning materials in all lessons. The teaching and learning process should

be directed toward green behavior development. Disaster mitigation and interacting skills in family members were considered as important skills in preparing students to live in the society.

The process of character and social skills building could also be achieved teachers of superiors who acted as role models. For example, the principle and teacher used public transportation rather than using their own vehicles, brought their own lunch box and drinking bottle to reduce the use of plastics used, took and put garbage into the trash can. The examples were regarded as good examples to be shown to the students.

Not only the results of this research showed that students could implement disaster mitigation and interacting skills with family members through simulation and role playing, but also the academic atmosphere in which reward and punishment were implemented to all school members gave positive contribution toward the development of students' character and social skills. As a result, the society would give its trust to schools as they had become suitable places for students to develop their character. In line with the previous explanation, students who were annoyed and uncomfortable because of the traffic and pollution when they traveled to school could be remedied by establishing green schools. This situation could be resolved if students had the skill to communicate well to one another, to teachers and to others. Thus, this collaborative research could be a foundation to initiate the implementation of character and social skills in schools

Students could also learn outside the classroom where school yard or garden could be a suitable place to implement and develop ecological intelligence. In those places, students could do various activities such as discussing environmental issues, practicing a clean and healthy life, socializing with friends and teachers, reading, and practicing social skills by warning their friends who threw garbage, and many others. Schools that had the nations' culture academic atmosphere reflected a characterized society. From the observation in the research site, it was found that the academic atmosphere had the important elements that were needed in developing the previously elaborated social skills. In conclusion, the classroom action research conducted by the researcher, teacher and students had fulfilled the expected results as they could be seen from students' skills in reminding others who made mistakes or caused environmental damage, choosing and using appropriate words at home, schools and the society and many others.

Research Results

This research had produced several results as followings. Firstly,

social skills development was eventually incorporated in the teaching learning program by using text books with character elements as stated in the 2013 Curriculum for junior high school. The text books that were used were written by the researcher, published by one of the publisher in Bandung, and referred to the 2013 Curriculum. Text books from the ministry of education were also used in this research. However, to develop students' character, those text books were also redeveloped collaboratively by adding character elements in the first two chapters in grade VII that referred to the two main basic competences which were interspaces connectivity and demography. In the interspaces connectivity, skills related to disaster mitigation were added. As an example, one of the elements in disaster mitigation was skills in using verbal and non verbal language. By using verbal language, students were able to remind or warn other politely if there was any danger such as "please do not come near that dangerous area", "let's evacuate", "let's help our friends", "let's follow the guideline to overcome this disaster", "please do not throw away garbage to restricted area", "let's protect the place we live so that we can avoid any kind of disaster" and many others. Non verbal language was trained by using symbols such as waving hand to invite someone, showing a thumb as a sign of agreement or a sign of disaster mitigation instruction.

In the demography chapter, lessons of skills previously mentioned focusing on family and society were elaborated. In this lesson, Keluarga Berencana (KB) or Family Planning materials were also added as one of the government's program. A good quality family consisted of a father, a mother and two children and a helper if needed. Skills which were added in this chapter were social skills in communicating between members of family based on their own tasks and roles. In the social skills simulation, good and polite communication skills were trained to the students in dealing with tourists and foreigners. This feature had become the foundation to train communication skills related to the theme demography in that chapter. In the process of lesson plan that referred to the modified chapter, it could be seen that the teacher had significant supports to further develop the social studies teaching and learning activities although previously this teacher had difficulties in incorporating character and skills in the social studies teaching and learning as demanded by the 2013 Curriculum. The designing process based on the above format was positively welcomed by the teacher and this would then be a procedure that he would continue in the future.

Secondly, the implementation of the teaching and learning using social studies text books in junior high school that consisted of character education elements in developing students' social skills had undergone as expected. In

the beginning of the first cycle, the teacher seemed to be focused in the lesson delivery, thus there was little time to discuss the important of social skills related to the lesson with the students. As an example, the interspaces connectivity was delivered based on the textbooks and from the reflection activity, it was agreed that character elements was incorporated and more spaces were given to train students' verbal and non verbal communicating skills. Improvement was seen on further cycle not only on the process of adding space and time of delivering and discussing the lesson on character and social skills but also on social skills practices by using modified text books. Through constructive dialogs with the teacher and students, students' social skills development process that referred to the text books (modified chapters) could be well performed.

Thirdly, the teacher's reflection regarding the social studies teaching and learning using social studies text books for junior high schools students with character education content in developing social skills were as followings: (1) an agreement between the researcher and partners regarding the necessity to review administrative aspects in lesson plan such as well formulated character education and social skills in lesson plan, (2) an agreement between the researcher and partners regarding the important of learning process that was not only focused on the third main competence (understanding of the lesson) but also the first, second, and third main competence, (3) an agreement between the researcher and partners regarding the importance of developing students text books that were adjusted with the school's condition and situation and the additional competence that would be developed. The social studies text books for junior high schools students made and published by the Ministry of Education in Indonesia and text books published by private publisher, including the researcher's text books, needed enrichment. Character and skills enrichment needed to be adjusted with other elements in learning. It was agreed that teachers needed a vast autonomy in developing learning materials including reducing and adding character and skills elements in learning materials, thus text books or chapters that were personally developed by teachers would be more contextual with the problems being faced. (4) An agreement between the researcher and partners showed that the social studies teaching and learning that was supported with contextual text books, dialog process between partners and students, and students' exercise on disaster mitigation skills and social skills in interacting with family had been positively responded by students. They expressed their pleasure of learning in that manner as they could experience immediate benefits. They stated that social studies were intended not only to be learned but also to be practiced. These students' responses reflected the success of this research. Nonetheless, the main success in this research was the

teachers' intention to consistently apply the aforementioned procedure as the most suitable model for them and for their schools.

Lastly, the students' reflection regarding the social skills after completing the social studies lessons using text books for junior high schools students with character education content were as followings. They stated that social studies learning that involved students in practicing character were regarded beneficial. Social studies lesson that had been considered to focus on remembering the content of the book had become a meaningful learning. This situation was seen in students' writing and observation data. Students were able to well perform social skills that referred to the text books which were developed by the teachers. They enjoyed to be trained on how to do disaster mitigation. It was also known that disaster mitigation was a technical procedure that was not only used by rescuer but also by anyone by using expressions to ask, to warn and to invite. The use of proper words reflected a polite, tolerant, and emphatical character. They stated that social skills could be performed daily, thus they believed that social studies could actually be implemented. They also expressed that social studies could be daily implemented in family by using suitable expressions in asking to parents, requesting help to the helper and many others were practices that the benefits could be could instantly experienced by the students.

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