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**STRENGTHENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH THE
 TRADITIONAL GAME OF *ENGKLEK* IN THE THEMATIC LEARNING
 AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

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Abstract. The increasing cases of juvenile delinquency today, both in terms of quantity and quality, may become an indicator of declining ethics, morals, and character of the nation. This phenomenon, of course, cannot be separated from the role of education, especially in schools. In connection with the issue, the government is currently promoting the strengthening of character education. In the implementation, teachers hold a strategic position. Teachers should be able to make instructional decisions in improving the quality of character-based learning and to choose the right strategy according to the characteristics of the students. At the primary school level, the right learning strategy according to the characteristics of the students, and at the same time supporting character education is using games. Many traditional games are rich in cultural values and national character, such as *Engklek*. *Engklek* is a traditional jumping game on a flat field that has been patterned, then the player jumps one foot from one box to the next. The game teaches sportsmanship, togetherness, hard work, and at the same time provides pleasure. In addition, traditional games serve as a counterweight to modern games. Modern games tend to develop the left-brain, the right brain, and creativity. *Engklek* helps to develop empathy, feelings, and knowing self and nature. *Engklek* also contains the values of physical development, mental health, social, and problem solving. Based on the description, then the application of traditional games, especially *Engklek* in thematic learning in schools, can be used as an alternative to strengthen the character education at elementary schools.

Keywords: Character Education, Traditional Games, Integrated Thematic Learning

A. INTRODUCTION

The increasing cases of juvenile delinquency today, both in terms of quantity and quality, may become an indicator of declining ethics, morals, and character of the nation. One of the main factors is the globalization. This influence can be seen in the public media, both printed and electronic media, on news about juvenile delinquency such as student brawl, drug abuse, free sex, alcohol abuse, and so forth.

The thing we must pay more attention as to the delinquency is the loss of honesty, a character important in one's life. Many self-help canteens at schools have been closed down as they faced bankruptcy, which means that many students do not pay the food or beverages they take themselves. Cheating during exams is another matter showing the loss of honesty in our young generation's life.

This may be the result of the lack of character education, especially at the elementary level. It also cannot be separated from the role of government, especially related to the education policies. The government is currently intensively promoting the strengthening of character education. However, this program is not accompanied by improvements in the

cognitive substance in the curriculum. The success rate of learners is measured only from the academic achievement. Similarly, the policy criteria in determining the acceptance of new learners only use the academic scores from the previous level. This proves that the character of the learner is less considered, and character building is just an illusion.

The process of education and character building is determined by the three educational centers, i.e. the family, school, and community. As one of the educational centers, schools have a very significant role in character building. Without teachers, schools will find it difficult to meet the demands of the curriculum to achieve educational goals. Teachers should have the ability to choose appropriate learning strategies in accordance with the characteristics of the learners, as well as to meet the target curriculum and build the character of learners.

A learning strategy is crucial to the success of learning objectives. In determining the learning strategy, first thing to note is conformity with the characteristics of learners. Learners at elementary school level certainly have different characteristics compared to those in secondary and higher education. At the elementary level, with the age ranging from 6 to 12 years old, learners are at the stage of concrete operational development (Piaget, 1964). At this stage, learners are able to classify and control their perceptions, but still require a concrete reference.

Taking into account the stages of cognitive development, learners at the elementary school level have three main characteristics, including concrete, integrative, and hierarchical. Concrete means they need references to be seen, heard, smelled, and touched with the use of the environment as a source of learning in order to produce meaningful learning. Integrative means that learners view everything learned as a whole and describes the deductive way of thinking, from general to special. Hierarchical means learners develop things from the simplest to the more complex things gradually.

Based on the three traits of the developmental stages of elementary school learners, the thematic learning is very appropriate to be applied. Thematic learning is a teaching-learning approach that integrates several fields of study in a single theme. This integration provides a more meaningful learning experience for learners. Learners understand concepts through direct experience that connect with other concepts that have been understood.

In addition to paying attention to the development of learners, we have to bear in mind that the elementary school level is the age of playing. Playing is a fun way of learning for learners, and there are various games to choose. The materials learned will be stored in the mind and integrated with other experiences sometimes unnoticed. Games also establish a process of socialization naturally and shape the personality of learners.

There are various children's games, both modern and traditional games. At this time, children love modern games more than traditional games as with the influence of globalization and factors such as the historical factor, policies in formal education, as well as the development of technology. The development of technology has brought many new modern games, which are more attractive and practical for children—most games can be played alone at home, without needing the presence friends and parents. Somehow, these modern games have made children to grow neither with empathy nor with social values.

Based on the above description, it is necessary to make efforts to utilize traditional games as to help them survive and sustainable in the middle of the globalization era. Traditional games have a very important influence for the nation's cultural education, for the development of multiple intelligences and character building, and for teaching the social norms and the way of life of the people.

B. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Strengthening Character Education

The Character Education Reinforcement Movement is a continuation of the Nation Character Education National Movement of 2010. It has been encouraged by the Ministry of Education and Culture gradually because the application has not been maximized. The movement acts as the process of forming, transforming, and developing the potential of

learners throughout the country to be always good-minded, good-hearted, and well behaved in accordance with the philosophy of Indonesian society based on Pancasila.

This means that every aspect of character must be based on the five precepts of Pancasila comprehensively, i.e the people of the godhead, the nation that upholds the just and civilized humanity, the nation that puts forward the unity of the nation, the democratic and the high law and human rights, as well as that promotes justice and welfare (Kemendikbud, 2016).

In order to achieve the character of the people of Indonesia according to Pancasila, it is necessary for individuals to develop their character. Individual characters are psychologically interpreted as a result of the integration of four parts, namely the heart, mind, feeling, and sport. The heart is connected with feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. The mind is related to the process of reasoning to discover and apply knowledge critically, creatively, and innovatively. The feeling is related to the will, motivation, and creativity embodied in caring, image, and the creation of novelty. The sport is related to the process of perception, readiness, imitation, manipulation, and new activities with sportsmanship.

The manifestation of individual character is the result of the integration of the four parts of the nation's character according to the philosophy of Pancasila developed from the Design Master of Character Building 2010-2025 (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2010), among others: (1) the hearts are faithful and cautious, grateful, honest, trustworthy, just, orderly, patient, disciplined, obedient, responsible, empathetic, compassionate, risk-taking, persistent, loving the environment, willing to sacrifice, and patriotic; (2) the mind refers to critical thinking, creative innovative, analytical, curious, productive, science-oriented, and reflective; (3) the feeling refers to the sense of humanity, mutual respect, mutual love, mutual cooperation, togetherness, friendly, caring, respectful, tolerant, nationalist, loving the homeland, proud to use the national language and Indonesian products, dynamic, hard work, and work ethics, (4) sports are clean and healthy, sportive, tough, reliable, friendly, cooperative, determinative, competitive, cheerful, tenacious, and persistent.

The movement puts the character as the deepest dimension of education that civilizes people. The five main values of character are developed as interrelated priorities. The character values are (1) religious, (2) nationalist, (3) independent, (4) mutual cooperation, and (5) integrity (Kemendikbud, 2016).

The first character value is religious. This reflects the faith to God manifested in practicing religious teachings and beliefs, respecting religious differences, and upholding inter-religious tolerance. This includes three dimensions of relationship, namely: (1) relationship with God, (2) relationship among individuals, and (3) relationship with the universe (environment). The behaviors among others are love, peace, tolerance, respect for religious differences, confidence, interfaith cooperation, anti-bully and anti-violence, friendship, sincerity, protecting the marginalized, and so forth.

The second character value is nationalist. This is reflected in the way of thinking, acting, and doing that show loyalty, awareness, and high appreciation to the language, the physical, social, cultural, economic, and political environments of the nation, and placing the interests of the nation and state above personal and group interests. The behaviors among others are respect and preserve the culture of the nation, loving the homeland, willing to sacrifice, excellence, keeping the law-abiding environment, disciplined, and respecting the cultural diversity among tribes and religions.

The third character value is independent. This means that the attitude and behavior does not depend on others. One uses all the energy, mind, and time to realize the hope, dream, and ideals. The behaviors shown include hard work, resilience, creativity, professionalism, courage, and lifelong learning.

The fourth character value is cooperation. This reflects the act of appreciating cooperation in solving common problems. The behaviors shown as realization of cooperation are mutual respect, solidarity, empathy, anti-discrimination, deliberation to reach consensus, inclusiveness, and commitment.

The fifth character value is integrity. This underlies trustworthy behavior, commitment, and loyalty to humanitarian and moral values (moral integrity). The behaviors among others are responsibility as citizen, being active in social life, and consistent in action and word.

These character values must be put in the movement. The movement should also be universal, holistic, integrated, and participatory, as well as include the local wisdom value, the skill of the twenty-first century, fairness, inclusive skills, aligned with students' progress, and measurable. As a manifestation of the principle in harmony with the development of learners, the thing to do is to pay attention to learners' development with their characteristics. These developments include biological, psychological, and social development. In addition, learners need to gain intensive attention in meeting their development needs so the compatibility and acceptance of the movement and the results can be maximized.

Intensive attention is needed, especially in primary school students who are generally in the age range of 6-12 years old. In this period of social development, learners have the characteristic of expanding social relationships. They begin to meet larger social groups and establish social relationships by interacting with peers. This interaction has an important role in the development and maturity of learners' social behavior for the future.

2. Traditional Games

The traditional game is a game that has noble values and is important for the development of children. These developments include motor and psychological development. In addition, traditional games can also support the social development of learners. As Hurlock (1990) points out that game patterns can support the social development of learners. The game pattern under discussion reflects the social value, which involves interaction with peers. The atmosphere can be found in traditional games that have some of the following characteristics: (1) the use of the natural surroundings as a source of play and game tools, (2) played with more than one player, (3) having noble values and moral messages, (4) flexible in nature (can be done indoor and outdoor) and rules tailored to the players' agreement, (5) having emotional experience both the physical contact and eye contact and communication between players (Christiyati *et al.*, 1997).

One of the prominent features of the traditional game is performed by two or more people and face-to-face. This activity allows learners to interact with playmates. Traditional games as the result of the process of ancient human culture also possess values of local wisdom. In addition, traditional games have a very human educative role for the learning process of an individual, especially children. The role of education in traditional games is filled with the characters values. One of Indonesia's traditional games is *Engklek*.

3. The Essence of Engklek Games

This traditional game allegedly originated from the Netherlands, who entered Indonesia during the colonial era. The traditional game is derived from the Dutch language "Zondag Maandag". However, until now, there has been no authentic evidence that proves the history of the game. The game itself was also very popular in Europe during the World War. This game became famous in Indonesia after the independence. At first, girls only played this game, but over time, boys also played it.

The term *Engklek* is Javanese, while the terms in various regions include *soneah mandah*, *piccek baju*, *ingkling*, *suddhhamandha*, *tapalak*, and others (Pebryawan, 2015). *Engklek* is a traditional jumping game on a patterned flat field, then the player jumps on one foot from one patterned square to the next. The game contains sportsmanship, togetherness, hard work, and pleasure.

4. Philosophy of Engklek

Engklek serves as a counterweight to the modern games. Modern games tend to develop the left-brain, right brain, and creativity. Traditional games train empathy, feelings, and understanding of self and nature. In addition, it also contains the values of physical development, mental health, social, and problem solving (Iswinarti, 2010). These values can be seen from the pattern and the playing technique.

In the game, there is *gacuk*. Each player must look for *gacuk* first. The philosophy of *gacuk* means that in life ones must begin with capital. Capital does not have to be material, but can be the mind, knowledge, or will.

The next stage is *suit*. *Suit* should be done if there are two players. *Suit* is done to decide whose turn to start the game first. If there are more than two people, then *hom pimpah alaiyun gambreng* must be done. The term comes from Sanskrit which means “everything is from God and will be back to God”.

The game is about players jumping with one foot from one square to the next. This stage means that life is hard work, so do not give up. Before jumping, the player must throw the *gacuk* by turning the back against the arena.

5. Function of Engklek Games

Engklek as a traditional game is expected to be useful as a means of learning. Students can learn while playing outside the classroom, so learning becomes more meaningful and fun. The game technique also contains the values of good characters useful for learners.

Engklek is also an important educational tool. The game involves four child intelligences including kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and naturalist intelligence (Pebryawan, 2015). Kinesthetic intelligence includes special abilities, such as coordination, balance, skill, strength, flexibility, and the speed and ability to receive sensory stimuli. Second, intrapersonal intelligence is characterized by the ability to understand oneself and to act, represented by the understanding of one's strengths and limitations of self, will, motivation, disciplined, and self-respect. Third, interpersonal intelligence is the sensitivity to the environment, which includes the ability to understand the intent, purpose, and feelings of others in order to provide appropriate response to the facial expression, voice, and other people's body movements. Finally, the naturalist's intelligence is the ability to understand nature and surroundings by recognizing the natural phenomena, the forms, and understanding the creation of God Almighty.

6. Understanding Integrated Thematic Learning

Integrated thematic learning is a lesson that integrates multiple subject matters into a single theme or subject to provide meaningful experiences for learners. Meaningful means that learners can understand the concepts learned with direct and real experience in everyday life that connects between concepts of intra and inter subjects.

Integrated thematic learning is an effort to integrate aspects of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and creative thinking using themes. The theme is the main idea or subject matters, as the subject (Poerwadarminta, 1983). The theme is used a tool to introduce the concept to learners and to unify the contents of the curriculum in one unity. It aims for learners to recognize various concepts easily and clearly.

Integrated thematic learning activities are done by combining the basic competencies of several content of lessons at once in a one-on-one encounter. The learning system enables learners individually or actively to explore groups, to find the concept and principles of science holistically, meaningful, and authentic (Majid, 2014). Thematic learning also emphasizes the involvement of learners in the learning process. Learners are more actively involved in decision-making.

Learners no longer learn to use subject content such as Science, Indonesian, Mathematics, or other subjects. Learners learn a theme that includes several subjects and their competencies. In addition, the thematic learning combines the content of the several subjects into one so that learners know the relationship between these subjects.

This integrated thematic learning aims to make learners easier to observe, ask, reason, and communicate what has been learned during the learning process. Learning objects emphasize the natural, social, art, and cultural phenomena to bridge the exploration of this integrated thematic learning.

7. Strengthening Character Education through the Traditional *Engklek* Game

To achieve the character of the people of Indonesia according to the philosophy of Pancasila, individuals with characters are required. The individual character is psychologically the result of the integration between the heart, mind, feeling, and sport. The movement contains five main characters, i.e. religious, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity realized in learning through traditional games. One of the traditional games used in this thematic lesson is the *Engklek* game.

The traditional *Engklek* game steps are as follows. The first stage is the player must look for *gacuk*. The philosophy of *gacuk* means that in life ones must begin with capital. Capital does not have to be material, but can be the mind, knowledge, or will. This requires religious character, independence, and integrity. Religious character means that prayer must accompany every effort. If one has tried maximally, the next step is to pray and trust God. Self-character means that every activity must be done individually and should not depend on others, even though humans cannot live alone. The next character value is integrity, meaning that every effort must be done with the totality and accompanied by being responsible to all the risks.

The next stage is *suit*. *Suit* should be done if there are two players. *Suit* is done to decide whose turn to start the game first. If there are more than two people, then *hom pimpah alaiyun gambreng* must be done. The term comes from Sanskrit, which means "everything is from God and will be back to God". In this stage, the apparent character values are religious, integrity, cooperation, and nationalism. The value of the religious character is visible during *hom pimpah* meaning from God back to God. Before studying, learners are taught to pray first, and explain that the opportunities and the fortune of every human being are different. Some get their first turn to throw the *gacuk*, while some get the last chance. The value of the integrity character appears when the player throws the *gacuk* with full responsibility according to their respective turn. The value of cooperation character presents when players tolerate to give opportunity to other players to get a turn first.

The game is about players jumping with one foot from one square to the next. This stage means that life is hard work, so do not give up. Before jumping, the player must throw the *gacuk* by turning the back against the arena. The characters values in this stage are religious, nationalist, independent, and integrity. The value of the religious character present when players are taught to let God finish everything after all efforts and hard work has been done. The value of the nationalist character presents in the patterned squares. These squares are a picture of the agrarian country of Indonesia. With this, there is the hope that they will grow love to their homeland. The third character value is independence that appears when the player jumps with one foot from one square to another. This shows that every effort must be done independently. The integrity character presents when the players complete the game thoroughly with the responsibility of taking the *gacuk* that has been thrown, and returning to their original position and meeting the rules in the game.

8. Implementation of Strengthening Character Education through the Traditional *Engklek* Game in Thematic Learning

This traditional game is applied to the elementary school thematic teaching. Implementation of this game was done in Class VA SDN Tunjung Sekar 3 Malang on theme 1 (Organs of Motion of Animals and Humans) sub theme 1 (Organs of Motion of Animals) learning 6. As many as 24 students were divided into 8 groups. One group played one pattern of the game. The patterned squares were made from HVS papers printed on the upper surface. The learners threw a *gacuk* on the available numbers by turning the back against the arena. After the *gacuk* landed on one of the squares, the learner took the *gacuk* by obeying the rules applied to the game. The rules are, among other, that (1) the player must not step on the line separating one square from another in the pattern; (2) the player must jump from one square to another in order; and (3) in the middle of the game, the player must jump with the legs up to the last square, and that they should not jump on two legs or change legs.

Each player must complete the game by returning to the starting position with a *gacuk* that has been taken. After finishing the game, then the player must take the question card according to the number of *gacuk* thrown on the patterned squares of the game. After answering the questions on the question card, then the answers were collected in one group to be presented in front of the class.

The same rules can be applied in the next game. If there are two players, then the question is divided based on odd and even numbers. If there are more than two players, agreement must be made first. For the next session, the paper of the fixed-game pattern can be used, but the question cards must be replaced with other questions.

C. CONCLUSION

The traditional *Engklek* game can provide a positive role to the learners' character values. This automatically supports the Character Education Reinforcement program. The program is an effort to overcome the problem of declining ethics, morals, and characters of the nation. The use of traditional games is an appropriate step to maintain and foster the cultural values and character of learners.

The use of traditional games in the program must be enjoyable to learners and at the same time must educate and nourish the values of noble characters. Traditional games are also very likely to be applied in thematic learning because learning is directed at adjusting to the environment. With thematic learning, learners experience meaningful and fun learning.

Preserving traditional games in thematic learning does not mean to avoid modern games. We have to see traditional game as a balancer of modern game. Modern games seem to focus on individualism, while the traditional games put more priority to social properties.

Teachers can choose and use other traditional games in learning so that learning becomes meaningful and fun. Before using the traditional games, the teacher must understand the stages in each traditional game, in addition to the necessary tools used in the games. Meanwhile, to understand the characteristics of learners, the teacher must take into account which level of students will use the games.

The role of headmaster is also very important in implementing traditional games in thematic learning activities. There needs to be support from the principal in order to optimize the potential of learners and to encourage teachers to implement traditional games in thematic learning activities. Existing traditional games need to be developed to make it more meaningful and more fun for students.

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