Transforming the Character of Indonesian Adolescent: a Positive Impacts of The Institutional Culture of High School Equivalency Programs

Ila Rosmilawati[1]✉, Karta Sasmita[2]

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15294/jne.v6i2.25209

[1]Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

Every adolescent in Equivalency Programs is unique, affected by interrelated factors of exclusion, such as school exclusion, family situation, poverty, social status and gender bias, and geographical location. Hence, Indonesia Equivalency Programs can target these particular groups to create responsible future citizens and develop human capabilities. This paper aims to explore the features of institutional culture of High School Equivalency Programs that impact on student's character and learning performance. Ethnography study has been conducted in five nonformal schools in Banten Province that involved twenty five students in individual interviews. The results show that institutional culture of High School Equivalency Programs provides an opportunity for adolescent who engage in learning to transform their personal character to become more resilient, autonomous, sensing a positive identity and moral integrity. Conducive school culture build a positive image and sense of belonging of students in Equivalency Programs. In long term, this character will diminish destructive behaviour of young people and create active citizens. The positive impacts of institutional culture of High School Equivalency Programs on adolescent could potentially lead to higher social productivity and thus create greater economic growth.

✉ Correspondence Author:
E-mail: irosmilawati@untirta.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

We all introduced by the traditional pathways, that is school, work, and then retirement, but it is no longer the norm. There is an increasing demand of individuals going back from work to education due to an avoided circumstance of living the school before graduation and have to do some jobs. Most of these individuals clearly undergo transitions in their lives, which is switch between study and work, and later reenter study after work. Some of Indonesian adolescent are forced to encounter this kind of situation. They could not stay in formal education until graduate. Some of them are forced to enter the world of work, but later decide to back to education. Nonformal education, as known as education pathways that provide alternative to education accommodate these group of adolescents with flexible and inclusive learning environments. It is an integral part of lifelong learning that enable adolescent's emancipation and participation in education. These programs especially created for them who affected by interrelated factors of exclusion, such as poverty, social status and gender bias, and their life circumstances. Hence, nonformal education can target wider audience compare to formal education.

High School Equivalency Program is part of nonformal education streams that offer nonformal learning situation. Nonformal learning occurs in a planned by highly adaptable manner instutions, organizations and situations. High School Equivalency Programs has been extensively implemented in many Southeast Asia countries to improve basic education provisions in their countries in order to provide education for all.

High School Equivalency Programs has unique school culture compare to its counterpart, formal education. The concept of school culture or milieu is used to explain different aspects including "family background, student-teacher relationships, the dominant leadership styles, the languages and symbols, the procedurs and routines, and the definitions of success that make an organization unique." (Davis & Cates, 2018). School culture refers to the belief and attitude of school community that influencing every aspect of school functions. School culture direct to the values of the school as an organisation, either positive or negative (Vengrin, et al., 2018). School culture refers to the quality and character of school life (Greenway, 2017). School culture is constructed by school community and has significant impact on student performance and achievement (Cimen & Karadag, 2019). School

culture and environment affects students's sense of identity and self-image in relation to their other social position. In other words, school culture and environment may affect students' character. Character is a personality that formed from the results of the internalization of various virtues that are believed and used as a basis for perspective, thinking, and acting. According to Lickona (Zubaidi, 2011), character is related to moral concepts (moral knowing), moral attitude (moral feeling), and moral behaviour. While Cerenko (Samani, et al., 2012) mentions that character is an attribute or trait that distinguishes personal traits, ethical traits, and mental complexity of a person, a group or nation.

An effort to determine whether a link exists between a school culture and the positive of adolescents has been conducted on some studies. Hall and Hord (2015) identified factors school organizational culture influence school change and supporting students' behavior. Furthermore, Skaggs and Bodenhorn (2006) descrive student good character such as respect to others, fairness, truthfulness, and responsibility. Sutjipto (2011) mentions that student who have good character are individual who have knowledge about their potential, which are characterized by values such as reflective, confidents, rational, logical, critical, analytical, creative and innovative, independent, healthy life, responsible, pation, be willing to sacrifice, be trusted, think positively and be visionary. Furthermore, Khairudin and Susiwi (2013) explained that in order to develop student's character, every school has to maintain their school culture includes school integrity, school innovation and creativity, school cooperation, and quality oriented. Student's character also can be developed through school ritual, such as the activity of 'Jumat Infaq', which is every student donate their money ever Friday to help people in needs (Wardani, 2014). School culture and climate has been recognized an essential part of the school (Katsantonis, 2020).

Indonesian adolescent who study at High School Equivalency Programs, in this regard, has to develop their positive character. This may happen if the institutional culture of High School Equivalency Program offers such a good climate and learning environment of their students. Lange & Sletten (2002) offer insight that nonformal education such as Equivalency Education in Indonesia, need to practice some approach and build culture of learning that aiming on student's self-development. It is include maintaining a small size, emphasizing one-on-one interaction between teachers and students, creating suppor-

tive environment, allowing opportunities for student success relevant to the students' future and allowing flexibility in structure and emphasis on student decision-making.

This paper aims to explore the feature of institutional culture of High School Equiavalency Programs that impact on student's character and learning performance. In this research study, the main question is what virtue constitute a good character of Indonesian adolescent in High School Equivalency Programs? And what is Equivalency Education school culture that impacted in a good character of their students? In the context of student's character development, a conducive school culture is the overall physical background of the environment, atmosphere, nature, and climate of the school that can productively provide good experiences for students. Student's character may influence by teachers and head of school who show their leadearship and by becoming a role model of their students. In High School Equivalency programs context, the student's character can be developed in the hidden curriculum.

METHODS

This study used ethnographic research methods. Ethnographic research is a qualitative method where researchers observe and/or interact with a study's participants in their real-life environment. The central aim of ethnography is to provide rich, holistic insights into peoples' world views and actions, as well as the nature of the location the inhabit (Reeves, et al., 2013). The data collection methods used in this study are in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In depth interviews are intended to obtain a clear picture of what was said, thought, felt, and what was known by the interviewee. Ethnographic study was held in five community-based schooling or Indonesia Equivalency Education program. It is including SKB Kota Serang, SKB Kabupaten Serang, PKBM Al Kahfi Kota Serang, Homeschooling Primagama (HSPG) Kota Serang dan PKBM Bina Pengayoman Rutan Kota Serang. The ethnographic study was conducted for approximately four months with intensive meetings and interview with students, tutor and administrators of each schools. Total informans are 25 students and 8 teachers. Each informant was interviewed 1-2 times, depending on the information obtained from the first interview process. Interview topics consist of; student's profile and characteristic, school climate and environment, school values and culture, student-student and student-teacher

relationships, and school governance. In order to avoid a bias, such as 'interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear,' as a weakesses (Yin, 2014) of the interview process, two procedures have been applied in the interview processes, asking question based on the interview inquiry, followed by probing (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner.

Data and information from ethnographic study are then categorized and analyzed and presented in descriptive from based on themes that emerge in the qualitative analysis. Before creating a theme, initial coding is developed that begin with reading the first participant's interview transcript and field notes, and made thematic extraction of the interview transcript. The codes, furthermore, developed into similar codes is organized into themes or broad categories of idea from the data. Themes or categories are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea (Creswell, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The national education system is designed to have a flexible and dynamic nature that easily adapts to changes in science and technology, as well as changes that occur in society. High School Equivalency Programs is part of nonformal education sub system that is provided for community members who need education services. Principally, High School Equivalency Programs are flexible in terms of time, periode, curriculum, pedagogy, venue and language (UNESCO, 2013). This study has been identified some the institutional cultures of High School Equivalency Education emerged from findings, it is include; fair discipline policy, non-competitive learning environment, learning flexibility, and family-like schooling community. This institutional character refers to the long-term physical and social environment, and also school communitis' value and beliefs as described by students and teachers.

Fair discipline policy is used for school rules. The strategy of applying the rules is carried out in almost all high school equivalency programs in this study, with different context and strategies. For example, SKB Serang does not apply the rules of school uniforms because the student's backgrounds are diverse, ranging from 15 to 28 years old. The schools implement flexible school policies, related to school rules for students' academic achievement standards. Other 'flexible' aspect includes having flexible hours of teaching and learning. Under specific circumstan-

ce, such as worker students, it will appropriate to the student's living or work condition because it is designed to maximize contact time between teachers and learners. Furthermore, the shortened school day benefits students who without transfortation to school, students with different learning style and students who need to work during normal school hours (Gut & McLaughlin, 2012).
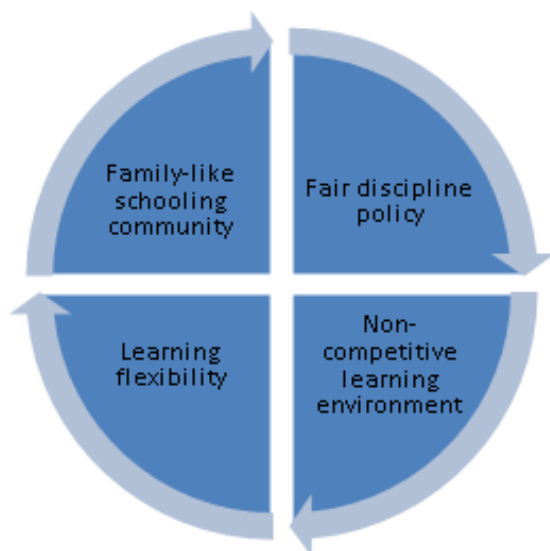

Figure 1. The institutional cultures of High School Equivalency Program

The education approach applies more supportive than punitive, which will make it easier for students to feel at home in school. This approach does not alienate students, but instead creates students to enjoy learning because it is supported by comfortable environment. A cooperative learning environment also provides a positive atmosphere for students, where students do not feel intimidated. Flexibility, in this type of school, offers 'different ways of learning' (Watson, 2011) – it is part of the institutional culture of High School Equivalency Programs that meet student's interest and pace of learning.

The institutional culture of High School Equivalency Program that has been described, based on this study, provide positive impact of student's character and behaviour. The institutional culture of High School Equivalency Programs provides opportunity for adolescent who engage in learning to transform their personal character to become more resilient, autonomous, sensing a positive identity and moral integrity. Institutional culture that impact student's character, in this study, refer to Greets' (Geertz, 1973) definition that is 'historically transitted pattern of meaning, that express through symbols and implicity in shared beliefs. School culture is '… mass of… learned

and transitted motor reactions, habits, techniques, ideas, values, and the behaviour ther induce' (Valsiner, 2000). Students in the High School Equivalency Programs have deeper sense of 'personality and values' of their school and act upon these in the school and create positive character and attitude. The students in this study have encountered the transformation of character. What we meant by student's character transformation here is to refer to a process of changing that involved the the difference characteristic of students (Sudiapermana & Muslikhah, 2020).

The first student's character impacted from institutional culture of High School Equivalency Programs is student resilience. The study result shows that some students are able to adapt to school's activity even though their life is challenging and sometimes they face difficulties. Most of young adult students in High School Equivalency Program are able to recover – to bounce back – any problem arises in their life. This student's situation confirm Schoon's (2006) explanation about resilience that is a dynamic process that individual show to adapt with an adversity. Family-like learning culture and flexibility in learning in High School Equivalency Programs is a feature that support student's resilience. It strengthens students to develop lifelong skills such as the ability to re-adjust their educational and life plans, while teachers in this study are also support their plan. The teachers are easy to communicate and treat the students like in the family situation. When a school culture support and the teachers respect their students, it gives motivation for learning and students feel they sense of belonging to the school. It is clear that institutional or school culture can foster natural resilienct in student (Benard, 2014). Furthermore, school culture and learning environment influence student's academic achievement (Ali & Siddiqui, 2016).

Student's self-control is identified as a positive character show by High School Equivalency Programs. Self-control in this study refers to the student's capacity to override an impulse in order to respond appropriately. For disadvantaged young people in non-traditional schooling like Equivalency programs, self-control plays a significant role in adolescent development. Many disadvantaged young people force to navigate their day-to-day challenge in their life and study. Thus, it need the ability of young students to alter their cognition, emotion and behaviour to meet social norms and among other capabilities to have self-control (Moffitt, & Caspi, 2016). Duckworth et al. (2019) confirmed that adolescent with high level of self-control, have better beha-

vioural problems, academic performance, social competence and likely able to avoid dropout from school. Fair discipline police that practice in High School Equivalency Programs influences the development of student's self-control. It gives opportunity and choice to the students to set their educational goals without fear. The students alse feel the sense of flexibility arises from the teaching and learning approach that is practice in High School Equivalency Programs.

Other positive shows by students at High School Equilency Programs is an autonomous learner. Autonomous learner in this study refers to the character of students who take an active role as a student in the school in every learning process. Many studenys in High School Equivalency Programs has taken an educational opportunity even tough in difficult time, such as studying while in prison or while working. This study confirm Kim and Talyor's (2008) investigation of alternative schooling in The United States that alternative school – which is has the same feature with Indonesia Equivalency Programs – has been provided a caring environment for students and it created trus between students and teacher. These students have their own definition of learning. Although it might be different with students in traditional school, students in Equivalency programs clearly has their own self-initiated to involve in the learning process and are able to interact with the world. The High School Equivalenc Programs also build a cooperative learning environment that provide positive atmosphere for students. The majority of students in this study do not feel intimidated if their learning methods and outcomes are different from other students. These positive outcomes will be different if the school culture emphasize on competitive learning environment in order to create individual achievement of learning.

Autonom student does not same as student in in isolated individuality, but it is the way a person create their own meaning about their learning in democratic learning environment. It is more about the development of student's agency. Teachers in High School Equivalency Programs have a crucial role in maintaining learning environment to enhance the autonomy of learners. Bangking education (Freire, 2000) cannot be practice by these teachers, it hase to be learner-centered education. Developing autonomy of the students is anatural process, but teachers can be playing a role to build a relationship with students to belief on their students. For example, students may create their own learning style and rhythm as the High School Equivalency Programs has

flexibility mode and approach. The programs offered learning mode through online and offline learning, and also provide one-on-one tutoring to meet students' need.

Students in this study also said that they are now develop a positive identity during their schooling. Most of students feel connected to their school that create a positive identity and exhibit positive lifestyle behaviors (McClure, et al., 2010). Reentry students in this study are success to build their new educational identities in High School Equivalency Programs through their choices to try the second educational option after failing from traditional school. Many on these students have decided to be coming back to school themselves after long hiatus. The Equivalency Programs school culture support this students' choices. The programs accommodate students' social, cultural and personal development to create and develop their own identity. A positive experienve in and outside school's environment also give an opportunity for student to test their abilities and ti build their confidence. This experience will influences student's positive identity (Novosadova, 2015). Many teachers in this study also promote and help students to act based on their beliefs and awareness. It is including student's physical and emotional performance, attitude toward learning and learning strategy created by individual student. Educator can become a model of moral formation and has an important role in strengthening the character of students by being ready to help students (Widodo & Nusantara, 2020). Educator also has to play a role as a guide, mentor and motivator who are in charge in n helping students to develop their potential in learning (Budiartati & Jamaris, 2018). In addition to school leader as significant person, the school also provides 'an adult environment', in which they always appreciate the students. The school leader will ensure that the school organisation and its community work to achieve a goal and give impact on school achievement (Yusof, 2016).

As many students have other life commitment, such as working, learning flexibility is a useful strategy and culture improve students' engagement and to prevent the dropout rate among disadvantaged students. Personalized school culture helps students to develop their identity. Furthermore, communal school organization (McClure, et al., 2010), in which most of High School Equivalency programs is small school compared to traditional schools, provide higher levels of social support to students. In contrast, traditional school culture reflecting a bureaucratic and top-

down authority that impact on students-teacher relationship and it might create student's learning disruption. In this regards, small school such as High School Equivalency Programs can reinforce student-student and student-teacher interaction and it help student to develop a positive image and identity as a student. There is not a hierarchical relationship between learners and teachers in High School Equivalncy Programs. There is no ranks or grading systems, so there is no hierarchy within the school setting.

CONCLUSION

Effective character education in school is not a set of programs or adding a new program. Rather it is a transformation of the school culture and life that support the development of student's individual character, such as resilience, honest, responsible citizen and student with self-control and positive identity. Conducive school culture builds a positive image and sense of belonging of students in High School Equivalency Programs. These positive outcomes of school culture are far-reaching as the impacted not only for students' character, but also for teacher and other school's stakeholders (parents and community). School with positive culture provide a space and unique opportunity for the young people involved to recover their own feeling of worth and to awaken the desire to proceed with a learning process which enables them to situate themselves in the society. In long term, this student's character will diminish destructive behaviour of young people and create active citizens. The positive impacts of institutional culture of High School Equivalency Programs on adolescent could potentially lead to higher social productivity and thus create greater economic growth.

REFERENCES

Ali, Z., & Siddiqui, M.-R. (2016). School Climate: Learning Environment as a Predictor of Student's Academic Achievement. *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education*, *10*(1), 104–115.

Benard, B. (2015). *Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school, and community*. Portland, OR: Western Center for Drug-Free School and Communities.

Budiartati, E., Jamaris, M., & Yufiarti, Y. (2018). Music Instructional to Develop Character Values for Early Childhood at Fishery Community Tambak Lorok Semarang City. *Journal of Nonformal Education*, *4*(1), 47-56.

Cimen, B., & Karadag, B. (2019). Spiritual Leadership, Organizational Culture, Organizational Silence and Academic Success of the School. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, *25*(1), 1-50.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design : choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Davis, R., & Cates, S. (2018). The Implementation of the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument in Creation of A successful Organizational Cultural Change. Indiana. *International Journal of Business & Public Administration*, *15*(1).

Duckworth, A, L., Laxer, J, L., Eskreis-Winkler, L., Galla, B, M., & Gross, J. J. (2019). Self-control and academic achievement. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *70*.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed (30th anniversary ed.)*. New York: Continuum.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books, Inc Publishers.

Greenway, G. (2017). *The relationship between school climate and student achievement*. Georgia Southern University.

Gut, E., & McLaughlin, J. M. (2012). Alternative education's impact on office disciplinary referrals. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, *85*(6), 231-236.

Hall, G., & Hord, S. (2015). *Implementing change patterns, principles, and potholes* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Education.

Katsantonis, I. G. (2020). Investigation of the Impact of School Climate and Teachers' Self-Efficacy on Job Satisfaction: A Cross-Cultural Approach. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education*, *10*(1), 119–133.

Khairudin, M., & Susiwi, S. (2013). Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Pengembangan Budaya Sekolah Di Sekolah Islam Terpadu Salman Al Farisi Yogyakarta. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, *3*(1), 77–86.

Kim, J., & Taylor, K, A. (2008). Rethinking Alternative Education to Break the Cycle of Educational Inequality and Inequity. *He Journal of Educational Research*, *101*(4), 207–219.

Lange, C. M., & Sletten, S. J. (2002). *Alternative Education: A Bried History and Research Synthesis*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

McClure, A, C., Tanski, S., Kingsbury, J., Gerrard, M., & Sargent, J, D. (2010). Characteristics Associated With Low Self-Esteem Among US Adolescents. *Academic Pediatrics*, *10*(4), 234–244.

Moffitt, T, E., Poulton, R., & Caspi, A. (2016). Lifelong impact of early self-control. *American Scientist*, *101*.

Novosadova, M. (2015). Empowering young people through non-formal learning activities: Principles, methodological approaches and coaching. In *Youth Work and Non-formal Learning* (pp. 151–164). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Reeves, S., Peller, J., Goldman, J., & Kitto, S. (2013). Ethnography in qualitative educational re-

search: AMEE Guide No. 80. *Medical Teacher*, *35*(8).

Samani, Muchlas, & Hariyanto. (2012). *Konsep dan model pendidikan karakter*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

Schoon, I. (2006). *Risk and resilience, adaptations in changing times*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Skaggs, G., & Bodenhorn, N. (2006). Relationships between implementing character education, student behavior, and student achievement. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *18*(1), 82–114.

Sudiapermana, E., & Muslikhah. (2020). The Transformation of Sustainable Community Empowerment Based. *Journal of Nonformal Education*, *6*(1), 36–43.

Sutjipto. (2011). Rintisan pengembangan pendidikan karakter di satuan pendidikan. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, *17*(501–524).

UNESCO. (2013). *Flexible Learning Strategies: Country Case Report*. Bangkok: Thailand.

Valsiner, J. (2000). *Culture and human development: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Vengrin, C., Westfall-Rudd, D., Archibald, T., Rudd, R., & Singh, K. (2018). Factors affecting evaluation culture within a non-formal educational organization. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, *69*, 75–81.

Wardani, K. (2014). Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Budaya Sekolah di SD Negeri Taji Prambanan Klaten. *Seminar Nasional Konversi Dan Kualitas Pendidikan*, 23–27. Semarang: Universitas Negeri Semarang.

Watson, S. L. (2011). Somebody's Gotta Fight for Them. *Urban Education*, *46*(6), 1496–1525.

Widodo, W., & Nusantara, W. (2020). Building the Character of Children Through Non-Formal Education in Schools. *Journal of Nonformal Education*, *6*(1), 69–76.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research : design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Yusof, H., Osman, M. N. A.-H., & Noor, M. A. (2016). School Culture and Its Relationship with Teacher Leadership. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *6*(11), 272–286.

Zubaidi. (2011). *Desain pendidikan karakter*. Jakarta: Prenada Media.