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International Seminar On
EDUCATION and TECHNOLOGY - ISET
 Collaborative Graduate Schools Conference

**INITIATING CULTURAL-BASED CHARACTER LEARNING
IN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Masrukhi

Semarang State University, Semarang, Indonesia
masrukhiunnes@gmail.com

Abstract

Each nation will recognize the importance of character building in order to preserve and maintain its existence as a nation-state. The most strategic vehicle for character building process is education in schools, through the learning process in class. By taking a learning setting of Citizenship Education (PKn) in primary schools in Semarang, empirical studies which have conducted find a few things. Firstly, configuration model that was built of the latent exogenous variables , such as appreciation of teachers, principal leadership, school culture, learning design, and the latent endogenous variable; learning of character-building indicate that the model fit, based on the findings of Chi-Square value of 23.22 and its p-value of 0.0871. Secondly, the learning of character-building more awakened by the school culture and leadership of school principals. This study recommends several ways. First, it is necessary to increase the understanding of PKn elementary school teachers about Character Development through synergy activities between education department as a facilitator, universities as a material developer, by empowering and developing the existing institutions at the community of primary school teachers as Teacher Working Group (KKG), profession organizations, and so on. Second, it is necessary to facilitate the arrangement of examples or models of Citizenship Education learning design which contains Character Building, to teachers in primary schools by involving various stakeholders. Third, it is necessary to do structural approach, empowering principals to facilitate and motivate Citizenship Education teachers of Character Development learning in the classroom, which is done through the meetings of Principals Working Group (KKKS). Fourth, it is necessary to do the empowerment of school culture to support Character Development learning in PKn classroom through the strengthening of extra-curricular activities that can be created and developed by the Citizenship Education teachers by empowering local potentials which contain the noble values , such as traditional games, folklores, fairy tales, poetry, wise words, symbols, etc., which contain local wisdom.

Keywords: Character building, learning process, school culture.

Preliminary

Character Building is a very fundamental problem of the nation. In Indonesia, the effort to build character development in the context of national character has become a serious problem since the proclamation associated with periods of power consolidation. Herbert Feith stressed, "The Difficulties Which presaged this situation for the process of power consolidation changed from clear if one looks at the character of Indonesia as a



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political unit examines the divisive forces and growing from its geographical, economic, and socio-cultural organization." (Feith, 1992).

When the later consolidation of power was done, things that confront the nation for the next character development is a matter of social inequality; reality as a multi-ethnic community, multi religious and multi cultural. Bung Karno had asserted in a speech in front of the colonial judge committee in 1930, as follows:

".... To build nationality awareness, in this nationalism, there is a power, which later could open the pleasures of days later. We have a nationalism that must be positive nationalism, creative nationalism, nationalism which established, nationalism that "create and worship". Through the positive nationalism, Indonesian people can establish independent living conditions that are material and mysticism. (Soekarno, 1930:63)

In fact, by quoting the opinion of the great leader of Egypt at that time; Mustafa Kamal, Bung Karno reaffirmed;

"Because of nationalism, the backward nations could reach quickly the civilization, greatness and power. Only nationalism could be the blood that flows in the veins of strong nations and it could give life to every human being alive" . (Sukarno, 1930).

Post-reform, the Indonesian people crashed tremendous characters. Polite behaviour, tolerance, solidarity, social concerns, mutual cooperation, hard working and , such as attributes of good citizenship, is replaced by the barbarian culture; suspicion, selfishness, anarchism and so on.

The survey that was conducted by Klaus-Peter Kriegsmann (2003) from the Asian Development Bank, which identified six ASEAN countries of the six indicators; infrastructure, legal system, political stability, respect for intellectual property, the level of transparency and corporate governance, Indonesia was the country's most low credibility, after Vietnam, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and the highest is Singapore.

The low credibility of Indonesia in the eyes of the international world is a reflection of the behaviour of individuals who has no characters, so the negative impact on the state management, corporations, legal systems, which ultimately will reduce the competitiveness of Indonesia, and cause Indonesia more slumped socially, economically and culturally.

The importance of character in the existence of the nation, expressed also by Davidson and Rees-Mog (1997) as follows:

"All strong societies have a strong character basis. Any study of history of economic development shows the close relationship between moral and economic factors. Countries and groups that achieve successful development do so partly because they have an ethic that encourages the economic virtues of self-reliance, hard work, family and social responsibility, high savings, and honesty. "



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Lickona, a professor of education from Cortland University described the relationship between aspects of character and the progress of the nation. According Lickona (2003), there are ten signs of the times to watch out because if those signs already exists, it means that a nation is heading to face destruction. Those signs are: (1) increasing violence among adolescents, (2) use of language and words are deteriorating, (3) strong influence of peer group in the act of violence, (4) increasing self-destructive behaviour , such as the use of drugs, alcohol and free sex, (5) the more blurred the moral guidelines of good and bad, (6) declining work ethic, (7) low respect for parents and teachers, (8) low sense of individual responsibility and citizenship , (9) used to be dishonesty, and (10) the existence of mutual suspicion and hatred among fellow.

It was surprising that the indications of the young generation behaviour are already a common direction. A research conducted by Megawangi (2007) found those behaviour , such as increasing violence among adolescents, the use of language and words are deteriorating, the strong influence of peer group in violence, the phenomenon of increasing self-destructive behaviour, the more blurred the moral guidelines good and bad with the indications do not feel guilty when lying and there is no sense of empathy, declining work ethic among the young generation, increasingly low level of respect for parents and teachers, the phenomenon of low sense of individual and citizen responsibility, used to be dishonest among young generation and the presence of mutual suspicions and hatred among them.

As subjects in school are on a mission of smart and good citizenship, character building is an important mission of the Citizenship Education in schools. Citizenship Education subject directly related to the inculcation of values. In fact, this subject has an internalization responsibility of character building value which is bigger than other subject matter. With jargon Civic Intelligence, PKn expect to construct the learners to have a sense of citizenship in the life of nation and motherland. Civic Intelligence becomes weak when ignoring character development in it.

Associated with the internalization of building character early, then the process of learning in primary schools is very important. This process is a vehicle for initial enlightenment effort that will shape the cognitive structure of learners about the characters. Elementary school-age children still think a simple and concrete. Their world is still limited to their playing and family environment. The process of imitation is dominant for the efforts of values internalization.

Donna E. Norton, as quoted by Sunarto (2000) shows the results of his research that the views of cognitive development, a child will begin learning to read and enjoy simple books and demonstrate the new capabilities at the age of six to eight years. Then at the age of 10 to 12 years, children begin to develop strong linkages with the social relations more large as expected by the environment.

These conditions are very strategic for character development in the life of the child. In the future, the concepts of character that has been internalized in him will be the parameters for interaction with social phenomena as the result of the social construction of public culture.

Reminding golden age is very strategic for the development of character, learning process in primary schools should put more emphasis on character development, weather as



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an instructional effect or nurture effect. Citizenship Education whose mission is *smart and good citizenship* put the development of character as instructional effect which is reflected in the study materials, learning process, reference of learning that is used, to the evaluation of learning. But in the reality, these substantive issues are not reflected well on study materials and learning process in class.

Tilaar (2003) asserted her anxiety about the teaching of Citizenship Education in primary schools as follows:

"PPKn (Indonesian Civic Education version) developed by indoctrination, accumulating knowledge which is less meaningful, hegemonic and often being criticized anti-reality. The values of pluralism are neglected. PKn that should be developed as an education to shape the character of the nation, it is ignored. As an education that leads to shape the character, PKn that should implement multicultural education approach (transformation process of the way of life to respect, tolerance for diversity of cultures that live in a plural society), it is also ignored, whereas PKN is indeed the subject of education to accommodate students who come from various political areas, ethnic and different traditions. "

Research conducted by Masrukhi (2008), found that character development is low on study materials of Citizenship Education in elementary school. By basing ourselves on Cronbach framework in examining the character development problems which consists of beliefs, feelings and actions, Nawangsih found the distribution of content on study materials of Citizenship Education in primary schools as follows:

Table 1. Material Content of Character Building in Elementary School PPKn Books

No	Material of Study	Content of Character Building
1	Unity and integrity of the Nation	73%
2	Norms, laws and regulations	46%
3	Human rights	45%
4	Needs of citizens	30%
5	Constitution of the State	15%
6	Power and politics	12%
7	Five principles (Pancasila)	13%
8	Globalization	8%
	Total average	30.25%

Masrukhi's research finding as presented in the table above is the real situation in the reality that the study materials of Citizenship education in the Elementary School has a low content of character building.

While the portrait of Citizenship education learning in Elementary schools, the research results of Saefudin (2007) that by using qualitative analysis found the following these things. First, the methods used by teachers in the learning process of Citizenship education in primary schools more focused on the mastery of knowledge, memorization and



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tasks construction. Second, the subject materials are textbook-oriented which means that learning resources are mostly textbooks. Third, the learning atmosphere is more dominant of “one way communication”; teachers take the role as transmitter materials, while learners receive calmly.

Studying about the findings obtained in research conducted by Saefudin indicated that the character development has not been obtained a space proportionally in the learning of Citizenship education. “Information Processing” model of learning where teachers are more dominant position as a transmitter of knowledge through lecture method, memorization and assignments, as well as textbook-oriented is very difficult to build the learning process of building character. Learning of character building is a learning process that allows meaningful educational interactions, involving the deepest aspects that exist at the learners themselves. The learning requires the maximal support of the elements, such as good teaching materials, methods, teacher behaviours, as well as support the school environment.

The next problem is the determinant factors that influence the management of Citizenship Education learning as a developer of character. Then the next one is how to make an accurate model to build teaching/ learning process of Citizenship Education in schools as a builder of character.

Theoretical Basis

Two theories which are used to conduct an assessment of this issue are Gestalt theory of learning and constructivism learning theory.

Gestalt theory of learning is in the thicket of cognitive learning. Cognitive learning has contributed to the use of cognitive or mental element in the learning process, because its views are firmly that learning is not only mechanistic stimulus and response, but also involves mental activity within individuals who are currently studying. Therefore, according to cognitive learning theory, learning is an active mental process to achieve, remember and use knowledge. So that, human behaviour cannot be measured and observed without involving the mental processes , such as motivation, intent, beliefs, etc.

Even Gestalt theory assesses visual-motor functions for the behaviour observation. *"Assessment of visual-motor functions is the Importance of a comprehensive psychological evaluation. The Bender-Gestalt test has provided insight into problems as mental retardation, learning disabilities, personality dynamics and brain injury (Decker, 2008).*

The figures who join to construct this theory are Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler and Kurt Koffka. They have not felt satisfied with the findings of previous scholars who claimed that learning is as a process of stimuli and responses as well as humans are mechanistic. Their researches are more emphasis on perception. According to them, human beings are not only men who are able to react if there are stimuli that affect it. But more than that, humans are individual creatures whose spiritual and carnal. Thus, when humans react to its environment, humans do not just respond, but also includes their different subjectivity elements among them.



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Gestalt theory said that learning is a process that is based on understanding (insight). Because, basically, every person's behaviour is always based on cognition; the action whose function are to know and think about the situation in which behaviour occurs. In learning situations, the involvement of someone directly in the learning situation can produce an understanding that can help the individual to solve the problem. In other words, Gestalt theory states that the most important in the learning process is to understand what the individual learned by themselves. Therefore, Gestalt theory of learning is called insight learning theory.

In addition, this study also bases on learning theory constructivism. Despite both being in the cognitivism, this second theory is more existed in the corridor of praxis learning.

Characteristics of constructivism can be observed through the perspective of Mark Windschitl's "dilemma":

"As more specific phenomena, of interest, "dilemmas" are aspects of teachers' intellectual and lived experiences that prevent theoretical ideals of constructivism from being realized in practice in school setting. For frames of reference are used to describe these dilemmas. Conceptual dilemmas are rooted in teachers' attempts to understand the philosophical, psychological and epistemological underpinnings of constructivism. Pedagogical dilemmas for teachers arise from the more complex approaches to designing curriculum and fashioning learning experiences that constructivism demands. Cultural dilemmas emerge between teacher dilemmas emerge between teachers and students during the radical reorientation of classroom roles and expectations necessary to accommodate the constructivist ethos. Political dilemmas are associated with resistance from various stakeholders in school communities when institutional norm are questioned and routines of privilege and authority are disturbed. " (Windschitl, 2002)

Jean Piaget and Vygotsky stressed that changes of cognitive into development occurs when the existing previous concepts began to shift because there is new information received through the disequilibrium process. In addition, Jean Piaget Vygotsky also emphasized the importance of social environment in the study by stating that the integration capabilities in the group of learning will be able to increase the changes conceptually.

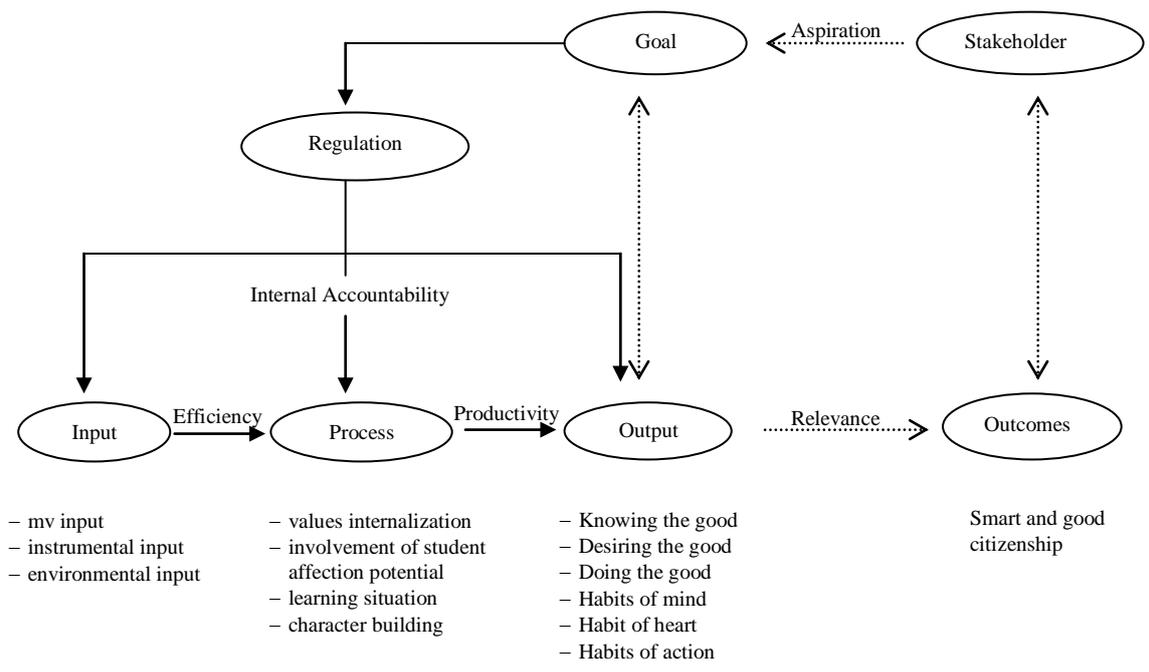
In view of Vygotsky (Elliot, 2003), learning is a process that involves two important elements. First, learning is a biological process as the basic process. Second, learning is a psychosocial process as a higher process and essentially related to the socio-cultural environment. Thus, further Vygotsky, the appearance of a person's behaviour is due to the intervening these two elements. By the time someone gets stimulus and its environment, he is going to use physical senses, such as tools to capture or absorb the stimulus. Then, by using his brain nerves, information that was received had been processed. Sense organ involvement in absorbing stimulation and nerve of the brain in managing the information obtained is the physical psychology process as a basic element in learning.

The second grand theory is packaged of approach system, where school as a place of conducting learning process is placed in a broader spectrum. It means that school cannot be apart from the community. Therefore, learning as a rotating system is also broader. It can

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happen by considering the interests and expectations of stakeholders in the community. In this context, the relationship between the learning process of Citizenship Education as a character builder that occurs in class cannot be separated with these complex systems. By using the framework of Makmun systems analysis (as quoted by Widodo, 2005), the complexity of the system will be illustrated as follows.

Figure 1. Systems Approach



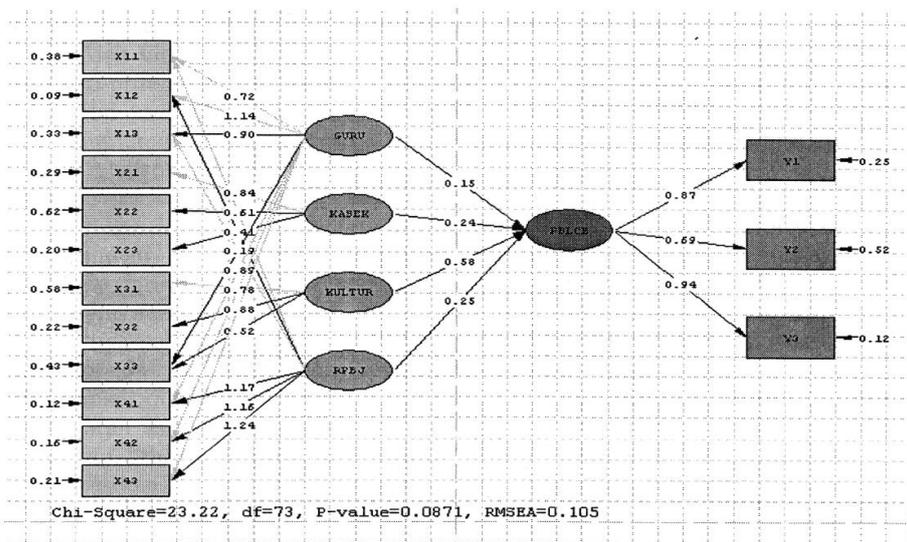
From the picture above shows that a learning system that includes elements of input, process and output is only part of a system that related to the life society. The result of PKN learning expected by society as stakeholders is forming character of learners to have good attitude and character. Desires and expectations of this society is an aspiration that have to be accommodated by teachers in setting goals of Citizenship Education learning in the classroom as a process of character building. The aspirations of stakeholders are become one of considerations in designing learning about threshold requirements; requirements that have to exist in the learning process of Citizenship Education in the classroom. Threshold requirements are inputs that consist of row input, instrumental inputs and environmental input. Within the process have to realize the internalization values, involvement of affective potential learners, learning atmosphere of character building, as well as output in the form of learner competence regarding the characters, including indicators of knowing the good, desiring the good, doing the good, habits of the mind, habits of heart and habits of action. Competency of these students eventually lead to the formation of attribute competence “smart and good citizenship” that applied in daily life in society as citizens, and once to answer the expectations of society in which students will reside.

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1. Empirical Reality of Learning Configuration

From the data review process, obtained the full model of configuration conceptualization of the influence of a teacher appreciation, principal leadership, school culture, and learning design to the learning of character development, as shown below:

Figure 3. Effect Diagram between Models Full Variable



The output of data analysis if the model will be consulted with the test indicated by the model fit, as follows:

Fit Value Indicator	Coefficient	Interpretation
Chi-Square	52.29	chi square value approaching 0 indicates that model fit.
P Value	0.064	Greater than 0.05 means identical data with the model.

The finding of a full model through the LISREL calculation shows that all exogenous latent variables to support together the formation of learning character development. Variables that provide the highest impact which can be seen from the path coefficient is the school culture reached 0.62, followed by the principle leadership 0.234, the next lesson plan 0.17, and last appreciation for teachers on character development reached 0.05.

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Learning of character development on the current reality according to the data was influenced by the school culture and the principal leadership. It means that learning of character development occurs empirically only happen if the school environment and school

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Further, modifications made to obtain a model that really fit. The modification is based on indicator of modifications (modification indices) LISREL through viewing coefficients in full model analysis (basic model). Modifications is done by adding a custom indicator variable in the school environment in learning character development (X33). It is the indicator of supporting teacher appreciation in character development. Besides, teacher appreciation indicator variables, namely X1.1: Cognition on character building, X1.2: Affection of character development and X1.3: Cognition regarding the character development are also supporting indicators of character development learning design. Furthermore, the indicator variable X4.1: teaching materials, X4.2: Method of learning and X4.3: instructional media are also supporting indicator of teacher appreciation on character building. The modification result model as shown in the model figure follows.

Figure 4. The result of fit model modifications

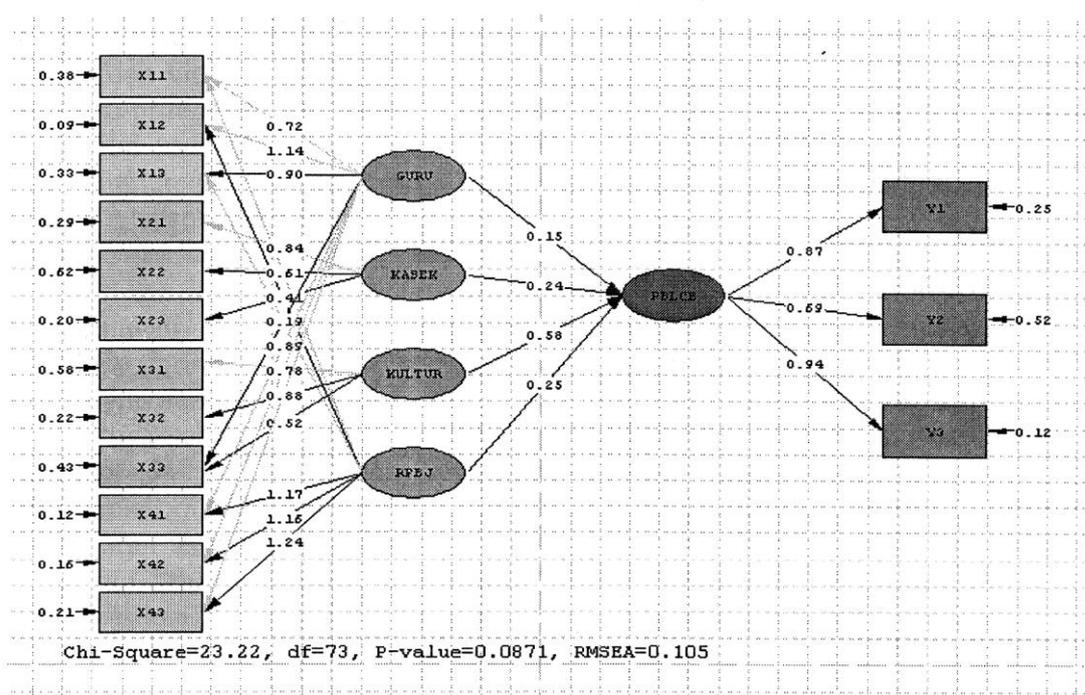


Diagram of the model in the picture above shows the value of Chi-Square of 23.22 and its p-value of 0.0871. It shows fit numbers because p-value is higher than the significance level 5% (0.05). It also indicates that there is no difference in the results model of analysis modification with an empirical model (Model Fit). From the result of modification obtained standard regression coefficient of teacher appreciation on character development to be increased from 0.05 to 0.07, the standard regression coefficient of the character building lesson plan from 0.17 to 0.25.

An indicator variable of habit in the school environment with learning character development (X33) is the supporting indicator that is big enough for teacher appreciation on character building (0.41).



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Indicator of teacher appreciation in the form of cognition about character development is a supporting in learning design of character development and empirical condition show a positive figure of 0.08. Meanwhile, the appreciation of teacher in the form of affection on character development is still relatively weak. It causes the low of character design on character development with the negative standard coefficient. In line with that, the character-building lesson plan in teaching materials, teaching methods and instructional media are also still very weak and very poorly understood by teachers.

Character development learning is a complex totality which requires support from a variety of potential that exists in school. Brook and Gooble (in El Mubarok, 2008) described the complexity which included principles, processes and practices in the learning process. It starts from the values taught had to be manifested in the curriculum which is easily digested and translated by learners in daily life into the school environment that contains its own culture.

Therefore, according to Brook and Gooble (in El Mubarok, 2008), to create learning contents as character development, there are several principles must be adhered. Firstly, school should be viewed as an environment which is like an island with its own culture and language. However, school also needs to expand character education not only to the teachers, staff and students, but also to the family and society. Secondly, in carrying out the curriculum of character, the teaching of values should always relate with the whole school system, the subject is taught as separate-stand alone subject, but integrated into the whole school curriculum and also entire academicians aware and support the teaching values. Thirdly, emphasis is placed to stimulate the learners how to translate these principles into the value of prosaically behaviour.

In the base assumptions, empirically found in this study. Citizenship education learning that brings the character development mission must obtain the support of various components in the school. By using LISREL analysis as a technique in SEM, indicated that the variables which contribute the highest was 0.62 for the school culture fixation and principle leadership at 0.23.

These facts have implications on teachers' views about learning that learning is not a process of transformation of knowledge, but a process of interaction between all potential learners with education environment (schools) maximally. Through such a process, it will make intensive dialogues, because learners observe, experience, do, and interact with the environment in school. Finally, cognition or internalized values within the learners themselves are the result of the building itself through interaction with the environment.

It is consistent with two theories of learning which are used in this research, the Gestalt learning theory and constructivism learning theory. Gestalt learning theory relies on the functioning of self-insight on students. So, it's often called insight theory (insightful learning). This study confirmed that: first, Insight depends on basic skills. Every individual has a basic capability that different from one to another. The difference usually lies on the age. Usually the young is more difficult to learn with insight. Second, *insight* depends on relevant of the past experience. Background helped the formation of *insight*, but does not guarantee the formation of *insight*. Third, *insight* depends on the settings of *insight* situations. Learning insight is only possible if the learning situation is set, so that all aspects required



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can be observed. Fourth, *insight* was preceded with a period of searching and experimenting. Individual before solving the problem may make responses that are less relevant to solve the problem. Fifth, the solution for the problem by using *insight* can be repeated easily and will apply directly. Sixth, it is the most essential part that if the insight had been formed, the problem in other situation can be solved. *Insight* has the ability to be transferred from one problem to another, although the situation that leads to different *insights* with the new situation and material, but in same realization and generalization.

Whereas on constructivism learning theory, the important principles in this context are that in the learning process, learners should be active and engage learners into learning centre and in the classroom learning. Therefore, the teacher is a facilitator which facilitates the process by using ways that make information becomes meaningful for students, through attractive methods, media and teaching materials synergistically. Teachers must also provide opportunities for students to find or apply their own ideas, beside to teach the students to realize and aware of their own learning strategy.

The students need to be familiar to solve problems, find something useful for them, and doing with ideas. Teacher won't be able to guide all knowledge and norms to the students. The students have to construct knowledge and norms in their own mind set. The essence of this constructivism is the ideas. The students have to find and transform certain complex information into other situation. Based on that, teaching and learning have to be in "constructing" process, not only "receiving" knowledge and norms.

2. CULTURAL-BASED LEARNING

Building an Indonesian citizenship teacher education which contains character building should explore the headmaster's leadership potency and culture which grows in the school community. Headmaster leadership as a personal manifestation which has structural authority in the research finding which has high correlation, shown by correlation index as 0.58, with learning which contains of character building. The roles of headmaster's leadership are in the modelling, giving motivation, giving facilities, and able to create and to stand the regulations at school. That is way, taking the headmaster's role can be meant as structural approaches.

Besides exploring the headmaster's leadership, the growing and developing culture at school can't be ignored. The correlation between school culture and learning which contains character building has high coefficient that is 0.94.

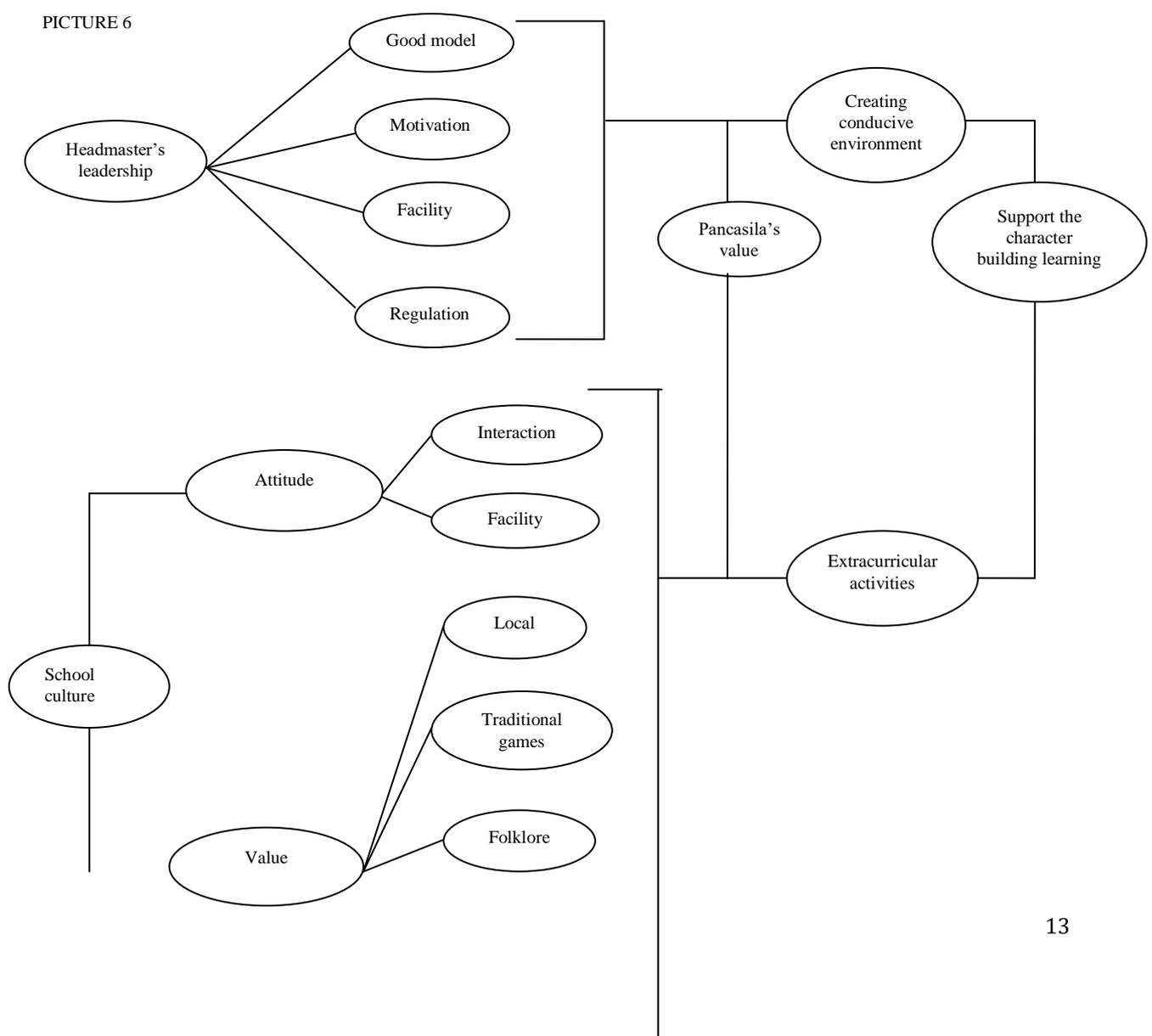
Exploring the school culture can be done through extracurricular activities that are created and improved by Indonesian citizenship teacher. Goes along with the extracurricular characters, in these activities, the teacher can make any improvements in every occasion because they don't be under the formal curriculum again. Local potency which contains moral value can be added here, traditional games, folklore, fairy tales, prose, wise words, symbols, etc. All those potencies can be arranged into interesting extracurricular activities agenda to the students. That effort can be named as cultural approach.

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There are two approaches which are explained above; structural approach and cultural approach must be based on the Pancasila parameter. This can't be apart from a Principle that the effort of character building in Indonesian context is characters which base on Pancasila as the basic value.

The visualization of the synergy between structural approach and cultural approach in the effort of building Indonesian citizenship leaning which contains character building is as the following:

PICTURE 6





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The third tradition is; *“Civic Education Taught as Social Science*. In this tradition, the learning modus is also emphasizes on the development good citizens which is signed with the ability of:....*mode and thinking from social science disciplines, that this mode of thinking, is generalizable, and having learned he will understand properly, appreciate deeply, infer carefully, and conclude logically* (Barr et.all., 2978:106). It means that this tradition pays more attention in the development efforts of good citizens’ characters which are signed by the ability of facing and solving social problems using vision and social scientist way of work.

The three Citizenship Education learning traditions aren’t seen black and white, which means if we use one the approach, we leave other approaches. The differentiation of that Citizenship Education orientation is only academically. Practically, synergism between the three traditions will give effective learning impact for the creating good citizens. This is because the indicator of the good citizens are citizens who obey the norms and *role of law* which grow and develop in the social life (Tradition of *Social Studies Taught as Citizenship Transmission*), citizens who have ability to analyze social problems and then able to make smart decisions (*Tradition of Social Studies Taught as Reflective Inquiry*), and citizens who can seen and solve social and personal problems using visions and social scientist way (tradition of *Social Studies Taught as Social Science*).

3. CLOSING

This research finds that school culture and headmaster’s leadership give significance contributions to the formation of Citizenship Education learning process which contains character building. School culture gives 33.64% while headmaster’s leadership gives 5.76%. These research findings bring implication that the formation of Citizenship Education learning process which contains character building to its students should be started by creating conducive school situations. The two things which have to be created are school culture and headmaster’s leadership. Even though those two variables don’t have direct connection to the class learning process, however, the value investment is not only happens in the classroom. The formation of school culture and headmaster’s leadership can be achieved when it is supported by all related sides. From policy aspect, support from Education Department, from mentality and material are needed from university over there.

The second finding of this research is that in the elementary school’s Citizenship Education management, characters building is a synergic effort, in some aspects, from the teacher’s appreciation, school culture, headmaster’s leadership, and teaching design. This finding gives implication that the effort of enlighten to all participants from all potencies at school about characters building needs to be done with well planned, systematic, and cohesive by involving all character building experts, supported by the decision maker that are headmaster and education department.

Modification of fit model is shown that teacher’s appreciation indicator which forms a cognition about the character building is a support in the teaching design which contains character building at empiric situation shows positive point of 0.08, meanwhile, the teacher’s appreciation which is as an affection of creating characters building and conation about characters building is still low enough which becomes one of the causes of the minimal level teaching design which consists of character building with negative standard coefficient. In



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line with that, teaching design which contains character building in the teaching materials, teaching methods, and teaching media is also still weak and the teachers don't understand well. Implication of this finding is that there is still an important role of the teacher in the teaching process which contains character building. Therefore, the teaching of Citizenship Education teachers about character building should be done well planned and systematic started from the changing of the structural cognition of teachers of the importance of character building to the effort of changing teachers' *mindset* about character building.

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