

School Creed, a Potential Strategy to Shape Character Building for Better Education Quality in Indonesia

(An Inspiration from Wollongong Public School, Australia)

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Abstract: *The quality of a nation is determined by its young generation character. A good system of education upholding character education may lead to this objective. However, creating character generation is not an easy work. It needs strong commitment, hard efforts, inclusive cooperation, consistent actions, sustainable policy and smart innovations. The writer sees school creed as potential initiative of a grand innovation to shape character students. Some authors in education and psychology has published a numerous articles about the strength of school creed to improve students' learning motivation. A number of countries, in developed countries particularly, has implemented it in their learning practices. Those facts inspire the writer to revisit, to deeply explore and to analyze the potential power of school creed to his educational setting in a developing country. This writing tries to elaborate on how a school creed to be created, and on how school creed can work optimally in Indonesia.*

Keywords: *School creed, character building, quality students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is a kind of crimes conducted by young people under 17. It has become a serious problem of crime for the teenagers in almost countries in the world. In Indonesia, a lot of the people in below of the age has become the active smoker, narcotic, free sex, and the actor in criminal of more violent acts, such as murder. Recently we have seen on TV and newspaper about the fighting between gang of female juvenile in the senior high school. This fact shows the increasing number of of crimes constructed by juvenile. According to Moedikdo (2012), juvenile delinquency is:

1. All acts of an adult in a crime that is prohibited by criminal law, such as stealing, torturing and so on.
2. All acts deviation from the norm of certain groups to cause confusion in the community.
3. All acts that indicate the need for social protection.

From the definition above, we can claim the condition in our country currently has been in the danger level, since the amount of all types of law-breaking actions conducted by young people is real and tend to increase, like crimes in theft, narcotics, smoking, and murder.

As individuals who are in the growing period psychologically and physically, children are very deterrent to internal and external influence beyond their personality. Internal influence comes from the family. To Muslich (2011:93), family contribute to children character development at least in four aspects, namely unity and individual bonding, faith and belief, tolerance and respect, and healthy life.

Furthermore, children character development is also influenced by external environment, such as school and surrounding neighbors. Character education is about becoming a school of character, a place that puts character first. School is a community of virtue that promote moral and intellectual qualities: good judgment, best effort, respect, kindness, honesty, excellent service and citizenship. These values then needs to be intensively modeled, upheld, discussed, celebrated, and practiced in order to make it as part of work ethic and life for all members of school. The realization of school character and character students appear on how the school members build their peer relationship, show respect to the adults, manage the discipline obstructions, design the content of curriculum, commitment to academic standards, influence on spirit of activities, implement the conduct of extra

curricular activities and involve parents in school decision and policy. In the end, all these efforts drive to institutional capacity to produce students as moral agents, those who may create better character for themselves and a better society.

One of potential way to introduce and to shape good character students in school is making use of school creed. A school creed is an attempt to provide a plan for starting, sustaining, assessing, and continually improving a systematic approach to transform good characters to all students, regardless their different ideology and school philosophical construct. For a more comprehensive analysis reason, the writer focuses his writing here on exploring the urgent quality involvement of students may succeed the implementation of school creed for school culture improvement. Another two crucial parties of character development, i.e. involvement of staffs and parents, will possibly discussed in different time.

In the first part, the writer wants to talk about why the school needs a creed. Secondly the discussion will be about what educational values implied in a school creed and the last point will discuss about how it may shape students' characters to realize quality education.

2. WHAT IS SCHOOL CREED?

Hornby (1995:274) defines creed as "a set of beliefs or opinions, especially religious beliefs". In general, school creed is a way to present the common shared values and aspirations of all members of school community. Some research prove that a school creed plays important role as a glue to run successful organizations together and keep the members focused even during crisis times. It creates collective community that makes the school members feel strong connections and a shared moral identity due to commonly joined values. It also serves as reference values of school life in general, guidance for day-to-day discussions and actions in school domain, and sources of critical thinking and ethical judgment to deal with the complexity of situations and circumstances in school today.

Even more, Lickona explicitly locates the school creed as the most efficient way to educate character building for students. In his proposal "Using 100 hundred ways to educate character to students" he suggests three ways portraying the features of school creed to empower character education, namely:

1. To create a code of behavior for your classroom (and school) on which students and teacher agree
2. To choose a personal motto and share it with your students.
3. To promote a "virtue of the month", study it and give an award to the student who makes the greatest progress in the virtue.

Those three strategies above can be run in the form of school creed.

3. BENEFITS OF SCHOOL CREED

Agreeing with Meader (2011) and Lickona (2004), the writer sees school creed is potentially powerful to enhance character and education quality as it:

1. Motivates students through the power of suggestion. Garry (2012) confirmed that deliberate an intentional suggestion may influence people to perform better on their learning and memory tasks, and to respond appropriately to an expected behavior.
2. Sends a powerful message for becoming character students. Character students can be created through inculcation and action learning approach (Muslich, 2011:119). The earlier emphasizes on inculcating social values to children that results in common understanding and agreement towards certain values accepted and glorified to achieve communal harmony. While the later, action learning approach, allows students to do moral actions individually or collectively to improve their quality of learning.
3. Creates positive effects on your student.
4. Strives students to reach beyond the realm of the school and will stay with each student throughout their life
5. Expresses the shared values, virtues, spirit and aspirations from all school community members,
6. Acts as a strong glue to tie up the members of organization in any situation,
7. Creates strong connections and a shared moral identity among the members due to its commonly shared values,

8. Serves as reference for the school members, especially for daily decisions regarding to their right and obligations,
9. Provides media to teach and to transform basic essential virtues to students,
10. Establishes a part of system for recognizing positive behavior,
11. Improves the school culture as a whole through various tasks and responsibility as members of the school

The writer believes that every school or institution has their own thought that somewhat manifested in their school creed. Each of them probably will be different one another based on their school nature, characters and ideology. Related to the point 11 above, culture of learning language has a very closed connection with the students' learning styles. Bradsay & Hill (1993:7) classify learning styles into three categories, namely Lookers, Listeners and Movers. Creed as media to support students' learning has simultaneously fulfilled the teacher's demand to serve their students based on their leaning style. The Looker students will be influenced much by recitation and execution of school creed as it develop their language ability, and social skills. For Listener students, indoctrination of school creed regularly will improve their intellectual, because the students can speak aloud and improve their reading by reading aloud and follow directions.

For multicultural countries such as Indonesia and Australia, having a school creed enables school management to build cultural awareness among the students. The diversity of values and attitudes shown by the students even can be generated as a media for learning. To Tomalin & Stempleski (1993:121), a shared commitment like school creed may give more benefits, like increasing students' consciousness toward cultural differences in values and attitudes; helping them become more aware their own culture and the target country culture; and of the diversity of ideas and practices found across cultures in the real life.

4. TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS (TEYL)

Teaching English to Young Learners is a rapidly growing field around the world. As teaching them needs different approach compared to teaching adults, we need to know first their characteristics. Cameron (2001: 1) mention six children characteristics in learning, namely they (1) are more enthusiastic and lively learner; (2) want to please the teacher rather than their peer group; (3) will do an activity even they don't quite understand why or how; (4) lose interest more quickly and less motivated on tasks they find difficult; (5) use language as they want fro communication, and (6) often less embarrassed than adults at talking in a new language upon which may ease them to get a more native-like accent. In more detailed description, Lobo (2003) describes young learners as individuals who are:

1. very receptive
2. curious
3. spontaneous and willing to participate
4. physically active
5. deeply involved in the world of fantasy and imagination
6. highly linked to the teacher
7. learn by doing
8. can't concentrate for a long time
9. do not analyze the language
10. can't remember things for a long time if they are not recycled

Related to the children characteristics point 1-very receptive, and point 9-do not analyze the language, it is very relevant with what Markman (in O'Grady, 2005:58) has called the Mutual Exclusivity Assumption (MEA) in which children try to avoid calling things by more than one name. In other words, things should have only one label. Furthermore, the positive message indoctrination through school creed will make the values in the creed will be strongly imprinted in their mind.

From these characteristics of young learners, the teachers should be patient and keep their spirit to teach the children in the learning process. The children will feel fun and enthusiastic when the teacher give more attention.

5. STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS

Knowing the learner's learning styles, teachers should compose effective strategies to manage them in learning process. Strategy is needed in the process of teaching to build the students' motivation and being independent in their learning. To become independent learners, teacher may learn to apply strategies-based teaching (Bergeron &Bradbury-Wolff, 2002:7). In addition, Shin (2012) suggests some strategies to help the teacher in teaching English for young learners:

1. Supplement activities with visuals, realia, and movement
2. Involve students in making visuals and realia
3. Move from activity to activity
4. Teach in themes
5. Use stories and contexts familiar to students
6. Establish classroom routines in English
7. Use L1 as a resource when necessary
8. Bring in helpers from the community
9. Collaborate with other teachers in your school
10. Communicate with other TEYL professionals

6. LEARNING FROM THE BEST PRACTICE OF SCHOOL CREED IMPLEMENTATION

Before exploring deeply about the significant impact of school creed toward students' learning, let us have a look on an example of School Creed owned by Gwynneville Public School in New South Wales, Australia.

TODAY IS A NEW DAY.

I WILL ACT IN A SAFE AND HEALTHY WAY.

I WILL RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS.

I WILL TREAT ALL PROPERTY WITH RESPECT.

I WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY LEARNING AND BEHAVIOUR.

TODAY I WILL BE THE BEST ME I CAN BE!

At glance, the series of sentences in the creed above look simple. In fact, when we explore deeper the keywords in it, we will find it has strong message and values. Every morning students should gather in school yard to attend morning ceremony. In general, the activity starts with reciting the school creed loudly, then followed by motivational speech by school teacher.

In the following, the writer tries to interpret the values within each sentence and how they possibly work either in Indonesia.

1. TODAY IS A NEW DAY

Students in Indonesia mostly go to school six days in a week. In fact, they are heterogeneous in terms of economic background, level of intelligence, personal interest, language and attitude, social status, and so forth. These condition creates a situation in which the students will interact and perform in multiways, because psychologically children are in unstable circumstance, still. The changing mental development and the dynamic influence of school environment may create various effects toward students. Some of them successfully can perform well by reaching good score, but some others may

be failed in their learning. Some students may conduct misbehavior actions like bullying, and some students may feel irritated and inferior due to their peer misbehavior. This situation can result in traumatic feeling if there is no preventive action.

Therefore the first value of “Today is New Day” meet its significance. It implies that everyday is new; that what happened yesterday won’t be the same as today or tomorrow; that failure yesterday can be a success today; that a student’s destiny starts (again) from today!. A very amazing magic words. It sounds like a healing of students’ stress, failure, bad luck, misfortune, misbehavior, class oppression, mental illness, etc. This creed may encourage students to have new spirit of learning and struggle for their life, without haunted by erroneous actions in the past.

2. I WILL ACT IN A SAFE AND HEALTHY WAY

There are at least three key words in this sentence: Act, Safe and Healthy. Act means students are expected to do as many things as possible in their growing period that covers affective, cognitive and psychomotor actions. More practices and actions are good for children mental and emotional improvement. However, it is not enough. They also need to consider to do an action that safe and healthy. Throwing a ball is good action, but it can be unsafe if they do not control and aware of their surroundings. Having chocolate is good for nutrition but it can be unhealthy if they consume too much. Running and play pick-a-boo and go-back to-door is fun for physical, but it can be dangerous if struck other players. We see a number of children actions that are meaningful, but somehow do not consider the aspect of safety and health. Take for example, a girl want to swim long as other normal students do, but in the end she has good asthma. Or some boys eat and drink lot without knowing their hygiene. As a result, they can be sick, or may harm other people, too. We can widen the scope of safe and healthy way in broader aspects of physical and mental. When they read the creed, they are expected to behave positively that safe for their body and mind, as well as that healthy in physical and in emotional. This is in line with a Latinese idiom “*Men Sana In Corpore Sano*” which means in a healthy body, lies a strong soul.

3. I WILL RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS

Nowadays, respect is a very expensive value. How many students still sincerely respect their beloved teachers, their parents, their religious leaders, their neighbors? and respect ourselves? The answer is possibly NOT MUCH respect. The increasing level of moral degradation among young generation in Indonesia becomes worrying. They tend to be more individualistic and egoistic. They demand people to respect them, but they do less respect to others, instead. Sentence in the creed above assigns us to respect to others if we want a respect from others. Respect will place everyone in a equal place. Respect may give fair appreciation to one’s strength and weaknesses. Respect indicates clear border to what extent we have authority and not. Respect may eliminate social gap among children. Respect make bullying and other acts of humiliation have no place anymore in this world. Respect may prevent human oppression and drive a peace life. And this attitude needs to be given since they were children as it is the best period to shape positive character building.

7. HOW TO MAKE A SCHOOL CREED POWERFUL

Different pond, different fish. From observing the practice of school creed implementation in the school, the writer could learn some lessons that make it work well:

1. The creed should be regularly recited in every morning everyday when the students attending school ceremony in school yard. It seems giving significant impact to students’ motivation to run their learning in school. It is relevant with what Meador (2016) claims that a school creed can motivate students through the power of suggestion. Asking students to regularly and intensively memorize and recite the school creed with a powerful message and fully-hearted expression will bring positive effects on the students’ mind and will stay with each students throughout their life.
2. The job of leading the creed recited should be distributed to students by turns, upon which each student will have own personal responsibility to memorize and practice the virtues at least when s/he is assigned to lead the recitation.
3. Whenever a negative behavior occurred, the teacher always advice them to recall what they have recited and promised in the school creed.

Those practices are in line with what has been suggested by Lackona in his book stating some steps on how to make the school creed work well for the students in particular:

1. Introduce the creed as reflection of expected character education standard to the entire students
2. Socializing the virtues stated in the school creed using authentic local strategies or from existing knowledge sources, like “100 Ways of Promoting Character Education”. Of course the selected ways should take the characteristics of students and school environment into account.
3. Seek the principal’s support for official policy
4. Give reward and appraisals for students proven most frequently committed and implemented the essence virtues in the creed.
5. It should be memorized and recited consistently, regularly as doctrine.
6. Teacher gives sufficient explanation appropriately by considering age, level of understanding, local wisdom, etc.

8. HOW TO CREATE A SCHOOL CREED?

Creating a creed for our school is easy easy difficult work. It is relatively easy because the words used tends to be simple and common for our hearings. But it could be bit hard since the words should be concise and meaningful and reflect the school ideology as well as its normative character quality. Regardless the chronological procedures, the following ideas can be counted as options to create a creed for your school:

1. Break it down from your school motto or slogan, vision and mission of your school that usually found in display banner throughout the school
2. Form leadership group consisting teachers, administrators, management, and parents if necessary to explore the philosophical ground and to formulate appropriate wordings
3. Match the aspiration of school members with a more established existing concept of good character, such as the following “10 essential virtues” adopted from Lickona’s.
 - a. Wisdom. It is the master virtue that drives to good judgment. It enables us to make good and reasoned decisions, to put the virtues into practice - when to act, how to act, and how to balance different virtues when they conflict, and to discern correctly in life, and to set priorities.
 - b. Justice. Justice means to treat other people as their rights. It includes many internal and interpersonal virtues, such as honesty, respect, responsibility, courtesy or civility and tolerance.
 - c. Fortitude. It is an inner toughness that enables us to overcome hardship, defeats, inconvenience, and pain. It teaches people to do something they believe as right when they must encounter problems or dilemma in their life. Right. It includes value of courage, resilience, patience, perseverance, endurance, and a healthy self-confidence. This virtue encourages students to build their gut to seize all the day in their life.
 - d. Self-Control. It is one’s ability to manage him/herself. It reflects self -discipline, ability to manage emotions and impulses, competency to refuse gratification to higher goals and ability to control sex libido.
 - e. Love. Love is the willingness to sacrifice for the sake of another. Love is mirror of empathy, compassion, kindness, generosity, service, loyalty, patriotism and forgiveness.
 - f. Positive Attitude. Positive attitude means audacity of hope, strong enthusiasm, adherence of flexibility, and colorful sense of humor.
 - g. Hard Work. We can see someone’s level of hard work from many aspects, such as his confidence to put up an initiative, commitment to diligence, number of goals set up and reached in certain period, and the wide scope of resourcefulness.
 - h. Integrity. Integrity concerns with moral principle, faithful formed conscience, self consistency, honesty, and never give up or ethical consistency. Integrity can prevent us from becoming a self-deceptive persons who can do whatever they wish regardless wrong or right for their satisfaction and try hard to find a justification on it.

- i. Gratitude. This virtue shows the habit of thanking to what other people have done, an appreciation toward God's blessing, an acknowledgment of debts to others, and stand away from complaining something we not expected to.
- j. Humility. Humility makes us aware of our inadequacy and drive us to always pursue to make goodness for mankind. Humility enables someone to take responsibility for his faults and failings, rather than blaming someone else.

9. SOME EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL CREED

In most developed countries, school creed is very common thing so that every educational institution must have. The followings are some examples of school creed.

1. Puterbaugh Middle School, McAlester, Oklahoma

*I am an intelligent and assertive student.
My destiny is in my hands.
I will overcome all obstacles which stand in my way.
The decisions I make today will affect the rest of my life.*

*I will have respect for myself and others.
I will also set a good example for my peers.
Education is my ticket to success.
If I say it can be done, I will achieve my goals.
I AM a Puterbaugh Middle School Student!*

2. Elementary School Creed (Woodland Elementary, Oklahoma)

I am a Woodland Elementary School student.
I have great expectations for myself.
I accept the challenge to become the best that I can be.

Yesterday's failures are behind me.
Today's successes are now before me.
I will make today the very best day of all, For this day begins the rest of my life.

I accept the responsibility for my behavior and its results.
I do not have the right to interfere with the learning and well being of others.

With my family and teachers,
I will determine what I will become,
For the education I receive today will make me a leader of tomorrow.

(http://www.greatexpectations.org/implementation_creeds.php)

3. THE SCHOOL LEARNER'S CREED, Helms Elementary School, Houston.

<http://www.houstonisd.org/domain/3413>

I believe in myself and in my ability
to do my best at all times.
Just for today, I will listen, I will speak,
I will read, I will write,
I will do all these things with one purpose in mind,
to do my best and not waste this day,
for this day will come no more.

10. SUMMARY

Creeds build a common language for the school or classroom. They instill a sense of pride and honor in students and teachers. A school/class/personal creed should inspire, motivate, and challenge. It can set the tone for the school, classroom, or person through the use of language that brings the fires of purpose and commitment to full blaze. A creed should include powerful affirmations that can be used to hold students and teachers accountable for their daily actions and decisions.

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