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Character-Based Curriculum and Textbook Development in Indonesia: A Critical Review

ABSTRACT: Education in Indonesia is declared to be in an emergency state, whereas a lot of innovative policies have been offered, mainly since the availability of education reform and autonomy in 2003. This situation illustrates the world of education in Indonesia are still many weaknesses and needs to be revised thoroughly. The education process, however, should be fun, child-centered, and that new curriculum policies have to be rooted in the people and exempted from short-term political interests. The writer argues that the national education system can be improved through developing character-based curriculum and textbooks by fulfilling four criteria, those are: the adoption of a broader conception of curriculum; participatory curriculum decision making; a critical analysis of characteristic values in textbooks; and developing character education by integrating good values into the textbooks and in other activities either planned or in those forming the hidden curriculum. Empirical findings from primary research and observation on the implementation of the 1994 Curriculum, Competency-Based and School-Based Curriculum (2006), and 2013 Curriculum, which are analyzed in lights of curriculum and textbook theories and practices from around the world, form the argumentative strengths of this article. The character education program has to be integrated in the curriculum revision and preparation of textbooks.

KEY WORD: Indonesian education, formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, textbooks, character values, integrating good values, and character education.

RESUME: "Pengembangan Kurikulum dan Buku Teks Berbasis Karakter di Indonesia: Sebuah Tinjauan Kritis". Pendidikan di Indonesia disinyalir mengalami keadaan gawat-darurat, padahal berbagai kebijakan inovatif telah dilaksanakan, terutama sejak bergulirnya reformasi dan otonomi pendidikan sejak tahun 2003. Keadaan ini menggambarkan dunia pendidikan di Indonesia masih banyak kelemahan dan perlu dibenahi secara menyeluruh. Proses pendidikan, walau bagaimanapun, hendaknya menyenangkan, berpusat pada peserta didik, dan kebijakan kurikulum baru harus berakar di masyarakat serta dibebaskan dari kepentingan politik sesaat. Penulis berargumen bahwa sistem pendidikan nasional akan dapat dibenahi melalui pengembangan kurikulum dan buku teks berbasis karakter, dimana penataan tersebut harus memenuhi empat persyaratan fundamental, yaitu: pengadopsian konsepsi kurikulum secara luas; pembuatan keputusan kurikulum secara partisipatif; penelaahan kritis nilai-nilai karakter didalam buku teks; dan pengembangan pendidikan karakter dengan pengintegrasian nilai-nilai karakter kedalam buku teks dan kegiatan-kegiatan lainnya, baik yang terencana maupun yang merupakan bagian dari kurikulum tersembunyi. Temuan empirik dari penelitian primer dan pengamatan tentang penerapan Kurikulum 1994, KBK-KTSP atau Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi – Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (2006), dan Kurikulum 2013, yang ditelaah secara kritis berdasarkan teori dan praktek kurikulum dan buku teks dari berbagai belahan dunia, membentuk kekuatan argumentasi tulisan ini. Program pendidikan karakter harus diintegrasikan dalam revisi kurikulum dan persiapan buku teks.

KATA KUNCI: Pendidikan Indonesia, kurikulum formal, kurikulum tersembunyi, buku teks, nilai karakter, integrasi nilai-nilai baik, dan pendidikan karakter.

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INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, Anies Baswedan, in a meeting with the heads of the country's provincial, regency, and city education agencies, on 1st December 2014, concluded that Indonesian education is in emergency. He exposed eight setbacks in the education system, those are: (1) three out of four schools do not meet the minimum standards of service; (2) teachers' competence is under standards, that is on average 44.5/100; (3) ranks the 40th or worst among 40 countries in an international mapping of education performance; (4) the higher education quality is positioned 49 of 50 countries; (5) the students' mastery of mathematics and natural sciences is the third worst based on TIMSS or Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study's mapping, or the 64th of 65 countries according to PISA or Programme for International Student Assessment's mapping; (6) Indonesians have a very low literacy habit, only 1 out 1,000 people is involved in serious reading; (7) physical and sexual violence is committed on or by students outside and inside school environment, more than 230 news reports on such violence were covered online during October and November 2014; and (8) in a few world mappings, Indonesia has been recorded as one of the worst country for bribery practices, organized crimes, corporate unethical behavior, and the lack of government transparency (Baswedan, 2014).

These findings are the bases for the Minister to conclude that Indonesian education system is in a state of emergency at present. Furthermore, Anies Baswedan explained some reform agendas in selected countries (China, Korea, America, Poland, England, and Finland), which help him to realize that education should be fun, child-centered, and that new curriculum policies have to be rooted in the people and exempted from short-term political interests.

Informed by such knowledge of the national and international contexts of education, Anies Baswedan then presented the new Jokowi-JK (Joko Widodo - Jusuf Kalla) government agendas in education,

delineated as "7 Roads to Mental Revolution", i.e. changing the education paradigm of "competitiveness" to that with "independent and having a strong personality" characters; designing a character-based curriculum as informed by local wisdoms and differentiated vocations based on regional geographical needs and students' talents; creating such learning processes that nurture learners' intrinsic motivation; recognizing a total role of teachers to manage students' learning processes; helping principals to become dedicated leaders in serving the school community; and simplifying educational bureaucracy and regulations balanced through mentoring and supervision (Baswedan, 2014:56).

At the philosophical and macro political level, the "7 Roads to Mental Revolution" appear to provide hope for Indonesia to change for the better. However, at the micro political level and implementation, such vision and mission, would undergo prolonged probation calling for consistency and perseverance from the political leaders and executive bureaucrats. It is argued that, as a matter of fact, the vision and mission are not much different from the content of the Act of National Education System No.20 of 2003, which is the idealistic manifestation of the 1998 Reform movement. In its implementation, the post-reform governments have successfully formulated decentralized education policies, including school-based curriculum, school-based quality management, local-based school council, school committee, and the Board of National Education Standards at the central government level (Jazadi, 2003).

Despite these, centralized practices are maintained through the rigidly controlled national examination and the latest controversial policy of changing the 2006 school-based curriculum with the 2013 centralized curriculum, genuinely against the Act No.20 of 2003, Clause 38 Verse 1 (Kemdikbud RI, 2014a) and the stopping of its implementation at schools whose beginning of use was 2014 (Kemdikbud RI, 2014b). Therefore, for a better Indonesia,

all competent elements of the nation need to help the new Minister to convert the rhetorical vision and mission into actions, so that the people can benefit, not be disadvantaged by those actions.

In this article, the author fully supports the measure to be taken by the Minister to design a character-based curriculum based on local wisdoms and diversified vocations based on regional geographical needs and student talents. However, the conceptualization of such curriculum design needs to be examined by answering several fundamental questions as follows: (1) to what extent is the gap between the "formal curriculum" as perceived by the government and "curriculum in general" that accommodates the need of character formation of the learners?; (2) what are the processes of national curriculum decision making or designing processes in Indonesia so far compared with the proper general procedures taking place in other parts of the world?; (3) to what extent does the curriculum product, especially textbooks, accommodate the need of learner character formation?; and (4) what are the guidelines in managing character-based curriculum and textbooks?

The discussion of these questions is based on the author's observation, literature survey, and primary research on curriculum and materials development (*cf* Jazadi, 2000, 2003 and 2008).

CONCEPTION OF CURRICULUM

When we ask teachers, government officers, students, or anyone generally in Indonesia about what "curriculum" is, what is referred to will almost certainly be the 2013 curriculum, the 2006 school-based curriculum, the 2004 competency-based curriculum, the 1994 curriculum, and the like. What if the same question is delivered to Minister Anies Baswedan and his technical team at the Curriculum and Book Center?

The author is concerned if the answer from the high ranking officers would be that the "character-based curriculum" as part of the new government vision and mission

will become the "substitute" of the 2013 curriculum and the 2006 curriculum that has been reused in the majority of schools since the second semester of school year 2014/2015. In other words, if that is the case, a common expression in Indonesia, "*ganti menteri, ganti kurikulum*" [a new minister, a new curriculum] would be strongly validated in this decade. This entails that curriculum change has always failed to respond to the education needs and the character building of learners and the nation at large.

Conceptually, curriculum can be defined narrowly and broadly. Curriculum is narrowly defined as "plans for learning", a curriculum theory from H. Taba (1962) that was at first used by many countries in the West in the 19th century in line with the growing of formal education and the strengthening of central government power (Sumintono, 2013:2). This narrow definition is, in fact, adopted in Indonesian education system; Act No.20 Year 2003, Clause 1 Point 19, states that "Curriculum is a set of plans and regulations pertaining to goals, content, and materials, also as means used as guides in organizing learning processes to attain determined educational goals" (Depdiknas RI, 2003).

This definition is a referent clause in all other education-related regulations including the higher education Act No.12 Year 2012, and the lower-level government and minister regulations. According to B. Sumintono (2013), the narrow definition implies the central power perspective and mono-linearity of in viewing curriculum. It is considered a traditional view whereby the government decides what knowledge is of most worth to be learnt or transmitted in a top-down fashion to the citizens (Sumintono, 2013:1-2).

Although the Education Act adopts the limited definition of curriculum, it fortunately defines different authorities of curriculum decision making, as delineated in Clause 38: (1) the basic frameworks and structure of the basic and senior high education is determined by the government; and (2) the basic and senior high education

curriculum is developed in accordance with its relevance by each group or unit of education and its respective school committee under the auspices of the education agency or office of religious affairs at the regency or city for basic education and those at the province for the senior high education (*cf* Depdiknas RI, 2003; and Sumintono, 2013).

This clause underpins the Minister decree of the 2006 school-based curriculum. If schools, teachers, and the education agency bureaucrats had had the expertise in curriculum development, the implementation of such a curriculum would not have been as equally bad as that of the preceding one although the definition adopted is still narrow and traditional. What exacerbated the system is when the then Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, Muhammad Nuh, changed the 2006 school-based curriculum with the 2013 centralized curriculum, while its preparation was done in a very short time (less than a year) by an ad hoc committee and did not involve practitioners and experts based at schools and universities (Kemdikbud, 2014a).

What is surprising is that the 2013 curriculum is regarded a school-based curriculum and so assumed in line with the education Act No.20 Year 2003 (*cf* Widayastono, 2013:180-192; and Kemdikbud RI, 2014c). Due to these phenomena, every competent individual of the nation deserves involvement for reminding that new Minister, Anies Baswedan, not to fall into the same or similar holes in any phase of his leadership service.

It is high time for the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia and agencies or offices of education to adopt the broader definition of curriculum. Latest literature identifies two kinds of curriculum applied at school. The first is prepared by the authority containing detailed description of goals and learning activities; this is called the formal or official curriculum. Such a curriculum has three sides: theory, product, and process, borrowing from M.K. Smith (2000) and B.

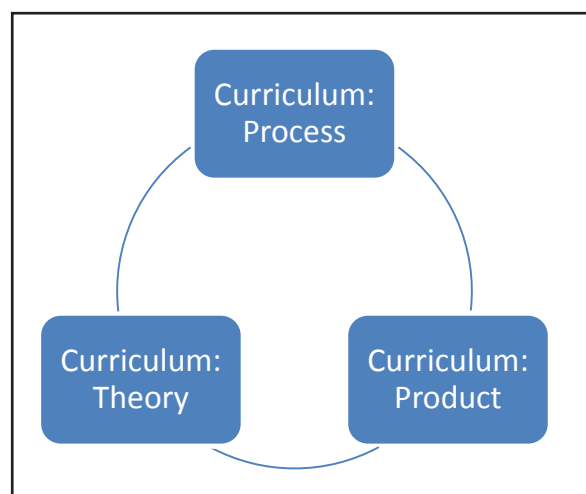


Figure 1:
Three Sides of Curriculum

Sumintono (2013). Diagrammatically, the three sides are presented in figure 1.

The theoretical side shows that a curriculum is a derivative of scientific or academic products comprising a list of content to learn within a particular period of time of a subject or theme. Each lesson or theme further presented to learners is originally products of academics that draw materials from literature and primary research, either in the country or overseas. Because scientists or researchers are involved in producing the theoretical side of curriculum, some materials in the curriculum may be the same as that in other countries, especially when the academics or scientists have achieved international reputation and got a lot of international experiences.

The side of curriculum as product places curriculum as that resulting from policies of government authorities in determining school learning agendas. In this case, a theoretical curriculum may undergo macro contextualization and adaptation at the national or regional level leading to the design of basic frameworks and structures of curriculum. In order that such frameworks and structures can be practically understood, a government curriculum center also provides examples of syllabuses, teaching materials, teaching learning activities,

assessment activities, and vignettes of student work. However, those curriculum product examples may not bind teachers, but are positioned as examples that may be useful to novice teachers and as comparative and refreshing materials for experienced teachers.

Meanwhile, the side of curriculum as process includes the process of interpretation, adaptation, and negotiation of curriculum by teachers together with and by considering the need of students. Teachers and students throughout the country are not forced and even not expected to have uniform teaching and learning experiences, although they refer to the same curriculum frameworks and structures. This positioning is fundamental to Indonesia with diverse geographical regions, cultures, religions, local wisdoms, and socio-economic strata.

After teaching and learning activities, teachers do some reflection, and the result of which is used to inform the design of the next lesson. In other words, teachers with students implement the real curriculum. In order that the curriculum practices can be compared, teachers alone or in team with other teachers, academics or supervisors need to write and publish about their collection of reflection as part of lesson study or participatory classroom action research. The collection of teacher best practices contributes to the disciplinary knowledge of education and informs policy formulation of curriculum renewal at the government level.

The second type of curriculum has essence that is not formulated and defined clearly, comprising elements not included in the goals and activities planned in the formal curriculum, this is called "hidden curriculum" (Yuksel, 2005:330-331; and Cubukcu, 2012:1528). While very low in predictability, hidden curriculum is highly effective in forming learners' characters. Therefore, the formal curriculum should be formulated in such a way that recognizes all forms of on-the-spot planning and learning and experiences, which actually support the attainment of the ultimate learning goals and objectives, but that are not mentioned in the predetermined frameworks, structures, and

plans, as integrated and enriching parts of the formal curriculum.

Curriculum development and implementation in such advanced countries as America, Australia, Canada, and England allow teachers to be creative and so the emergence of a lot of variants of curriculum and teaching materials is not problematic at all, even seen as a norm due to the different contexts of practice among schools and regions (Jazadi, 2000 and 2008). In the Indonesian context, the experience of applying the 2006 school-based curriculum can serve as an empirical foundation to anticipate the diversity and hidden curriculum, while continuing the efforts to improve the professionalism of teachers, supervisors, and coaches of curriculum at the local level.

Some experts suggest the hidden curriculum coverage. R. Ghosh (2010) states that the hidden curriculum is derived from the social, political, and cultural milieu of the community and must be understood in relation to the overall social power structures that affect the education system. If not properly assessed and accommodated, the effects of the hidden curriculum will reflect the socio-cultural, political, and economic structure of the society as it is; if the macro structure and situation is conducive, the hidden curriculum will give positive impacts, and vice versa (Ghosh, 2010:28).

In addition, the hidden curriculum also includes learning attitudes, norms, beliefs, values, and assumptions that are often expressed as rituals and rules, which are rarely questioned and just taken for granted. The consideration of the hidden curriculum to be good or bad depends on the value taken by each person (*cf* Seddon, 1983; Marsh, 1997:34; and Ghosh, 2010).

Furthermore, it is argued that hidden curriculum dwells in a variety of places, including physical and psychological environments of the school, attitudes and behavior of school administrators and teachers that are not written and fixed (Mirza, 2004:28; Yuksel, 2005:330; and Cubukcu, 2012:1528), and in the professional beliefs and teaching techniques of teachers

(Wyatt & Pickle, 1993). In addition, hidden curriculum lies in the hidden or implied messages of the official curriculum through textbook materials that convey a message contrary to the official curriculum explicit message (Massialas, 1996; Kentli, 2009; Holland, 2011; Acar, 2012; and Bayanfar, 2013).

In the Indonesian context, specifically related to instructional materials or textbooks, S. Winarni (2013) found that the teaching materials still do not adequately integrate positive values in them. If a teacher simply follows or carries out learning based on the learning activities in these books, character education in general will fail (Winarni, 2013:103-104). In this case, we need to realize that the hidden curriculum is a very powerful force affecting students positively or negatively depending on the state or of environment in which students find themselves. However, this power is generally ignored by school administrators, teachers, parents, and those in control of education policy, including textbooks publishers and authors (Massialas, 1996; and Sadtono, 2000).

Furthermore, the concept of "hidden" in hidden curriculum, according to J.P. Portelli (1993) and C.J. Marsh (1997), may have three possibilities of logical meaning: (1) X hides her/himself, that X is responsible for the hideout, X is the agent; (2) X is purposely hidden by someone else (Y); and (3) X is hidden, X is hidden unintentionally (Portelli, 1993; and Marsh, 1997:34).

J.P. Portelli (1993) again argues that hidden curriculum is not an agent and, therefore, the first choice is not correct. Two other options are equally possible, as a curriculum can be hidden from a person but not someone else (Portelli, 1993). In the case of the second option is true, S. Yuksel (2005) suggests two approaches for using the hidden curriculum, namely functional and critical approaches. According to adherents of the functional approach, the school takes part in a social arrangement by preparing students with the knowledge, skills, values, and opinion needed by the society; and this is done through the hidden curriculum

because it is found more effective. Second, a critical approach states that the power of the dominant class in society affects education through the hidden curriculum. According to this approach, schools help spread social injustice by conveying beliefs, values, and norms that benefit the dominant class (Yuksel, 2005:331).

Values, beliefs, and norms are delivered to students through the disguised or hidden messages. In the case of the second approach is true, it is not necessary for a particular party to be easily blamed as intellectual actors who smuggle messages through the curriculum, but the effort to find evidence of a material or a message contrary to the explicit purpose of the official curriculum should be done so that the curriculum can be constantly updated and achieve the expected goals (Yuksel, 2005).

In short, the curriculum conception and policies adopted by the government and other stakeholders should cover all sides of curriculum (theoretical, productive, and interactional); and recognize the existence of the hidden curriculum that are both intentional and non-intentional for the attainment of the curriculum, the purpose of education, and the formation of good characters in learners and the nation as a whole.

CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING

The quality and validity or legitimacy of the curriculum cannot be separated from the process of its preparation, designing, or manufacturing at the national government level or lower levels. In the context of democratization, decentralization, and pedagogical effectiveness, the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible (universities, bureaucracy, school administrators, parents, students, industry, etc.) and the mention of these processes and parties in the documents produced will enhance the credibility, acceptability, and contextualization of the curriculum. To that end, following are the discussion of some research about the extent to which the curriculum decision making in Indonesia has complied with the procedures and

requirements in curriculum decision making in several other countries.

An overview of research findings on the 1994 curriculum (Jazadi, 2003) and preliminary research on the 2013 curriculum show four important implications in the making and substance of Indonesian school curriculum documents. They concern the failure of the documents in the following: (1) to acknowledge or actually involve a range of stakeholders in their production and renewal; (2) to provide full support to teachers and learners; (3) to incorporate needs analyses and assessment procedures; and (4) to incorporate learning training and content knowledge as parts of instructional goals and objectives.

Document production and revision.

Two important issues concerned the curriculum documents' production and revision. The first was the documents' failure to acknowledge participants who were involved during the consultation and production processes of the documents. This failure may be due to the fact that those involved did not represent all interest groups throughout the nation, but mainly those based in Java, as stated by, for example, N. Huda (1990); F.A. Hamied (1993 and 1997); and E. Sadtono, M. O'Reilly & Handayani (1997); or that the preparation was mainly to fulfill a minimal standard of bureaucracy (Dardjowidjojo, 1993:102).

In the case of 2013 curriculum, the preparation took place within a very short time of six months (from January to June 2013), while its use at more than 6,000 schools began in the following month of July 2013 as the new school year 2013/2014 started and the rest of schools in the following school year (Kemdikbud RI, 2014a).

This situation is very different from the process of curriculum construction in developed countries, in which the curriculum is principally persuasive rather than prescriptive (cf Marsh, 1994; and Gerrald, 2013). The way to persuade potential users is by accommodating their needs and situations, and by acknowledging those writers and key individuals involved in curriculum production in publications.

For example, in the National Curriculum Project frameworks developed for the Australian Adult Migrant English Program (see Nunan & Burton, 1989), the national curriculum project team, including two coordinators, 24 team members, as well as an editor, consultants, and an evaluator are listed. These people are known figures in the field in Australia that many teachers would be familiar with. In addition, the large number of people involved enabled all the states and territories to be represented. This strategy increased the document's credibility with its potential users.

The other issue concerns the need to transform the 10-year formal national curriculum change cycle in Indonesia into a more continuous, decentralized and informal process by involving teachers and other stakeholders in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum documents (Burns & Joyce eds., 2000a). For example, the CSWE (*Certificates in Spoken and Written English*) that are used as national curriculum documents in the Australian AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program) are assessed in an on-going way via action research projects involving teachers in state centers throughout the country (NSW AMES, 1995 and 1998).

This research is fed back through a regular 3-5 year revision cycle of the documents. In addition, the findings are published in the *Teachers' Voices* series, edited by Anne Burns and colleagues, see for example, A. Burns & H. De Silva Joyce eds. (2000a and 2001); and H. De Silva Joyce ed. (2000), so that other teachers in the system can learn from the findings. In this connection, A. Burns & H. De Silva Joyce eds. (2000b) argue that "a living curriculum should always be a site of discussion, of examination, of experimentation, and of change" (Burns & Joyce eds., 2000b:vii).

Providing full support to, not imposition on, teachers and learners. The textual analysis of the 1994, 2006, and 2013 curriculum documents show that teachers were equipped with only limited professional support. This is certainly a concern, because successful curriculum

implementation requires a delicate balance of structured support and scope for teachers in response to their local contexts and students' needs. There are several ways this balance can be achieved.

Firstly, there must be formal recognition of teachers' and learners' involvement in decision making regarding teaching materials and methods, which at the same time does not negate the main curriculum principles or mislead teachers and students. The curriculum documents should formally acknowledge teachers' professional judgments, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences (*cf* Scarino *et al.*, 1988; Nunan & Burton, 1989; Woods, 1991 and 1996; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Burton, 1998 and 2000; Freeman, 1998 and 1999; Breen & Littlejohn eds., 2000; Graves, 2000; Richards, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Tomlinson, 2001; and Tudor, 2001).

An example of such an acknowledgement is the statements, related to the Israeli EFL (English as a Foreign Language) high school curriculum, that teachers with their classes *can* determine the pace of the work, design tasks, suggest a variety of approaches to the materials and add supplementary materials of their own choice (cited in Linder, 2000:95).

Next, the curriculum documents have to include practical procedures for teaching programming and materials development that teachers can follow. One way to do this in Indonesia would be to supplement the main curriculum document with some supporting operational documents. For example, for teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) and languages other than English in Australian schools, the Curriculum Corporation published six curriculum documents to accompany the main document, *Australian Language Levels Guidelines* (Scarino *et al.*, 1988; McKay & Scarino, 1991a and 1991b; Scarino, 1991 and 1992; Vale, Scarino & McKay, 1991; and AEC, 1994).

Likewise, a few years later, the Australian school curriculum document consisting of *Statements* and *Profiles* were published, in which each learning area *Statement* underpinned the curriculum; while the

Profiles provided a detailed procedure for assessment, even including samples of successful student work of particular tasks (Brady & Kennedy, 1999). If providing supplementary documents as in the above examples is not possible, the main document has to be explicit and consistent, and provide follow-up information.

Key technical terms used in the document have to be defined and sourced. For example, in the *ESL (English as a Second Language) Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* in the USA (United States of America), to substantiate the brief theoretical discussion, the readers are equipped with references for further reading in a variety of the subject sub-fields (TESOL, 1997). In addition, the curriculum document contains a glossary of terms showing the clarity of the framework and its internal consistency. This is a common feature of well-designed curriculum documents (Vale, Scarino & McKay, 1991). Such strategies help teachers to extract maximum support from curriculum documents as teaching guides and resources.

Finally, to offset detail and prescription, curriculum documents should be flexible. In this connection, D. Nunan & J. Burton (1989) propound "the teacher has a crucial role in curriculum development, particularly in courses that are meant to respond to learner needs"; and so "curriculum resources should be flexible, to enable teachers to plan courses from different starting points" (Nunan & Burton, 1989:1). For this reason, perhaps, at the end of every curriculum step described in the National Curriculum Frameworks for the AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program), teachers are left with questions to critique curriculum information and their decision making (Nunan & Burton, 1989).

Incorporating needs analysis and assessment procedures as integral parts of the curriculum. Needs analysis and assessment were two issues that the Indonesian curriculum documents have failed to address, while responsive curricula are ones that cater for learner needs and assessment as its integral parts. As the documents claimed that learner needs and characteristics are prime considerations

(Widyastono, 2013), they should have developed detailed sample procedures through which these could be assessed. D. Nunan & J. Burton (1989) explain that students' needs include affective factors (for example, the feeling of security and confidence); cultural differences and attitudes, their age, L1 (a first language), education background, and levels of proficiency; and their ongoing content and language needs (Nunan & Burton, 1989). Therefore, the setting of learning goals and objectives and materials preparation should be subject to negotiation with the students. Needs analysis often results in a combination of predetermined materials and goals or objectives, and materials and goals that emerge from the students' input. Thus, issues such as the role of L1 and cross-cultural understanding could be addressed through learners' needs analyses.

The other missing component in the Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) curriculum resources is assessment; this includes formative and summative assessment. Many current curriculum frameworks, for example, CSWE (*Certificates in Spoken and Written English*), ESL (*English as a Second Language*) *Standards for Pre-K-12 Students*, *Australian Statements*, and *Profiles* were developed based on a set of competencies, standards or outcomes that the learners have to achieve on completing their course of studies, so detailed procedures for teaching and description of the competencies are provided in or with the documents. These descriptions and details, which relate teaching and assessment, give the curriculum framework coherence.

The Indonesian high school English curriculum documents do not have this coherence, because the final assessment is nationally administered, and teachers' involvement in and awareness of its development and administration is scant. So, they do not have the knowledge or experience to critique assessment practice. Detailing procedures for conducting assessment in tandem with the other components in the curriculum document would guide teachers on assessment and

make them critically aware of assessment or testing that does not test what it should.

Therefore, it is argued that the agents that administer the assessment should be those who do the teaching and can involve the learners as assessors. For example, in the Australian AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program), the CSWE provides a detailed framework for assessment as a teaching guide. Although the assessment procedure could be seen as prescriptive, the AMEP teachers, who are supported to be reflective and who are committed to promoting learner-centeredness, can always adopt assessment strategies sensitive to particular learners' needs (Sangster, 2000).

Incorporating learner training and content knowledge as instructional goals and objectives. The instructional goals and objectives stipulated in the Indonesian school curriculum are limited to themes of discussion, while language subject (especially English) focuses on the four macro skills of English (reading, listening, writing, and speaking). Learner training (teaching learners how to learn effectively in the classroom and outside) has been neglected in the curriculum. Successful learners in the field study indicated that they employed specific strategies in their learning; it is, therefore, recommended that learner training be incorporated in the Indonesian school curriculum. The *Australian Language Level (ALL) Guidelines*, for example, incorporated "learning-how-to-learn goals", aiming to enable learners to take responsibility for their own learning in a variety of ways and settings (Vale, Scarino & McKay, 1991).

The other issue in the curriculum document under study, especially in language education, is to do with content knowledge. Although the curriculum goals and objectives are skills-oriented, in practice, the textbooks, and therefore teachers' teaching are themes-based, in other words, based on content knowledge; this is so because the themes component is what operates the curriculum. Using the themes to program teaching has seemed to be the practical choice. For this reason,

in tandem with clearly linking all the curriculum components, as indicated above, content goals could be explicitly integrated with language skills in the curriculum framework. Content knowledge goals refer to information and concepts about various aspects of life, including cross-cultural understanding, and other features that are not included in the other categories of goals (Tomlinson, 1999; and Graves, 2000).

In conclusion, the Indonesian school curriculum document needs to be modified to maximally benefit teachers and learners. However, it is worth emphasizing that the curriculum should be pursued to meet the decentralized criteria, namely that the government only prepares the basic frameworks and structures of the curriculum, while the actual and detailed curriculum remain as authoritative domains of schools together with various stakeholders under the auspices of the local education authority as mandated in the Education Act and vision and mission of Jokowi-JK or Joko Widodo – Jusuf Kalla’s government (Baswedan, 2014).

REPRESENTATION OF CHARACTER IN THE TEXTBOOK: THE CASE OF ENGLISH SUBJECT

The spearhead of the curriculum policy is the textbook, which is a bridge between official curriculum documents and teachers with students. In general, the researchers agree that textbooks play a very dominant role in the learning process, especially in countries that require official textbooks as the main reference in the school (*cf* Gopang *et al.*, 2012; Dewanti, 2013; Bermudez, 2014; and Prasojo, 2014). A high school teacher told the author that when he followed the socialization of the 2013 curriculum, one of the main pressures is to convince teachers to use the new mandated textbooks and to “throw” the previous textbooks (interview with Respondent A, 15/1/2015). On a different occasion and town, a school principal told the author after almost one half year of the implementation of the 2013 curriculum before the issue of a circular letter of its termination of use, the school had

planned to eliminate by “burning” the 2006 curriculum textbook collection considering the physical appearance of the books that already started to wrinkle and the must to use the 2013 curriculum textbooks (interview with Respondent B, 15/1/2015).

In short, any textbooks, let alone those obliged to use, certainly have a very large influence on the formation of cognition, affection, and psychomotor of learners. Unfortunately, often found textbook content does not reflect the official curriculum goals and objectives (Massialas, 1996; Jazadi, 2003 and 2008; and Mohamed, 2014). Therefore, to show this mismatch, the following two samples of English textbook contents are presented, each represents the curriculum of 1994 and 2013. See excerpt 1 and excerpt 2.

Excerpt 1 contains two descriptive text pedagogically made to teach about particular functions of English. It shows that the participants can be classified into three groups: (1) students, (2) professionals, and (3) workers. Terms to address (2) and (3) contain serious problems. Professionals (headmaster, teacher, and librarian) are addressed as “Mr.” or “Miss”, depending on the status, male or female. On the one hand, workers (janitor, postman) are addressed as *Pak* (an Indonesian word whose meaning is the same as “Mr.”). The words “Mr.” and *Pak* are used for adult men, referring to the profession and their socioeconomic status. “Mr.” is English and *Pak* is Indonesian. However, in many occasions especially in informal situations where English is used in Indonesia and one’s name is mentioned in conversation, the speaker (in Indonesian and English) will greet the interlocutor by selecting *Pak* or “Mr.”, *Bu* or “Mrs.”, “Aunt” or *Bibi/Bik*, and “Miss”. This practice is acceptable in socially (Jazadi, 2003).

The problem is that the Indonesian terms of address are only used in greeting workers and not professionals. What are the reasons used by the authors of textbooks in explaining these differences? The logical conclusion drawn from textbooks is that the difference in the terms of address is used to represent the socio-economic differences or the different jobs. “Mr.”, “Mrs.”, and

Excerpt 1:
English for Junior High School 1
(Sources: Murdibjono *et al.*, 1996. Underlines are added for emphasis)

Unit 2 (h. 15)

E. Look at the picture below and tell what it is about. Then read the text and answer the questions.



This is Lusy's school. Mr. Johan Untung is the headmaster. He is in his office. Miss Hadinoto is her English teacher. She is in the teachers' room. Nita is Lusy's friend. She is in the classroom. Mr. Agus Marpaung is a librarian. He is in the library. Mr. Budiono is a physics teacher. He is in the laboratory. Pak Slamet is a janitor. He is in the school garden. Look, the students are in the school yard.

Questions:

1. Whose school is this?
2. Where is Mr. Johan?
3. Where is Miss Hadinoto?
4. Where is Nita?
5. Where is Mr. Agus?
6. Where is Mr. Budiono?
7. Where is Pak Slamet?
8. Where are the students?

Unit Unit 10 (h. 59):

A. Santi and Lukman are talking about their families and relatives.
Read what they say.



We are all out working and studying. Oh, except Bibi, my servant. Father is a soldier. Mother is a secretary. My sister Mira dan I are students of SMP 1. My uncle is a policemen. And my grandfather is a farmer.



Well, my father is a doctor. And mom is a teacher. Bang Mamat is our driver. He drives us to school and to work. Pak Samio, the gardener, keeps our garden. He stays all the time with Bik Atun, our cook. Bik Atun's brother, Pak Syafril, is a postman. Every day he delivers letters.

"Miss" are used to greet people with a high socio-economic status (managers and professionals); therefore, English represents the elite or ruling. Meanwhile, *Pak*, *Bu*, and *Bik* are used to greet them with a lower status (janitor, maid, gardener, and postman).

Therefore, Indonesian represents the reverse, those with low socio-economic

status. In real life, most people found the words "Mr.", "Mrs." or "Miss", "Aunt", and *Pak*, *Bu*, *Nona*, or *Bik* solely represent the two different languages, English and Indonesian, not certain socio-economic status. Thus, if not corrected, students' uptake on how to address people at different levels of formality in English speaking countries

Excerpt 2:

The 2013 Curriculum English for SMA/SMK/MA/MAK,
Year X, Semester 1, pages 45-46, Chapter IV, Task 1
(Source: Kemdikbud RI, 2014c)

CONGRATULATIONS!

Nura arrives in a big city to help her parents settle their debts. She moves into Juna's house as a hired servant. In the house, Juna is a rich and proud young man who inherits his father's business. He is lazy and goes to campus just to meet friends and chase pretty girls who love his wealth.

In his chaotic life, Juna is betrayed by his own cousin and uncle leading to his downfall. Juna's life is in a real mess. However, Nura helps him gain his confidence and reorganize his life. Nura begins to teach the rich spoiled brat some manners through her down to earth scolding and no-nonsense attitude. The girl helps him pick up the pieces in his life, from defeat to success. Finally, after a long struggle and hard work, he can regain his life. He is now in the position of the director of the company that he inherits from his father.

Many of his friends congratulate him. Johny, his best friend, says, "Congratulations! You deserved it, man." [...]

Again, he answers those expressions contentedly, "It's very good of you to say so," "How nice of you to say that,"

"Thank you very much for saying so."

Nura observes this event from the backdoor. She cries happily for her master who has changed into a mature, stable young man.

may be distorted by the text, because they interpret such ways of addressing different people as a reflection of English rituals.

One more implicit message that deserves to be commented on, especially from the second text, the fifth and sixth sentences: "*Pak Samio, the gardener, keeps our garden. He stays all the time with Bik Atun, our cook*". In general, the quotes in the second text talk about all the activities outside the home and so those left at home were the cook and the gardener who were designed to spend their time together all the time. Actually, besides they are both working in the house (for the rich the house would have a big building and a vast yard away from neighbors' watch), can we assume that they are husband and wife who are employed in the home? Otherwise, should they just get married? Is it not that in Eastern cultures or religious contexts, an unmarried man is prohibited to spend time together in a quiet and lonely place with an unmarried woman? If the teacher and students swallow the message for what it is, a practice that a man and woman together in a quiet place will be a character, not seen as a problem. Is this a hidden agenda to be implanted by the formal education curriculum?

Excerpt 2 is a pedagogical text intended to introduce the use of the expression of

congratulations and their responses. Parts of the text that the author deliberately removed [...] contains 11 expressions of congratulations and 5 replies. Reviewing the text at a glance, the character of Nura appears as a young woman of a small town or rural origin who became a hero to the formation of personality and success of Juna, a student, a rich young man who previously lived spoiled, at his palatial home and in continuing the business of his parents who had recently passed away.

Judging from the complexity of the plot, the story certainly did not happen in a matter of a day or two, but it could be months or more. In the lack of seriousness on managing his business, Juna was tricked by his cousin and uncle who seized the company. In the chaotic living conditions of Juna, the hired young servant or housemaid, Nura had become a friend who restored the confidence of Juna. Slowly but surely, he managed to become a mature and stable young man. Again, the role of "counselor" Nura impossibly had lasted one or two days, but it could have been several months.

Nura's role was very heroic. However, beyond the positive character lie two hidden messages that deserve critical scrutiny. *First*, togetherness (being two) of a young woman Nura as a paid waitress and a young

men “Mr.” Juna (one of whose characters is fond of women) in the house for a long time while interacting first as a servant and a master, then “counselor-counselee” is a serious impropriety. For example, in Islamic religious views, two people (an unmarried man and woman) should not be alone in a quiet place, because there must be a third party that is the devil. Therefore, if this kind of materials is taken for granted by teachers and students, then slowly but surely permissive culture (towards falsehood) will thrive in this country, or has such a character become a phenomenon as exposed by the Education Minister, Anies Baswedan, at the beginning of this article?

Second, related to Juna’s expressions of replies to congratulations from friends for his success back into being the director in his company. He received approximately 12 congratulations and in response to his friend congratulations, Juna did not even mention the name of a hero who had helped him. Or, in the text as a whole there is no recognition from Juna of Nura’s great contribution. Instead, at the end of the text, it is emphasized that Nura as a servant is located not far from the back door or kitchen, looking at the behavior patterns of her master – who interacted with his privileged colleagues in the living room. In this context, a woman’s rights for actualization have been explicitly ignored – a message that is contrary to gender equality programs from the Ministry of Women and Child Empowerment (Bappenas RI, 2013).

Both cases above show an embodiment of official curriculum textbooks that have consistently failed to present positive moral messages into the national education system. For more discussion related to it, see I. Jazadi (2003 and 2008); and for a case in another country, see M.A.S. Mohamed (2014).

GUIDELINES OF CHARACTER-BASED CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOKS

According to A.H. Siswanto (2014:195), character education is a conscious effort to help people understand, care, and act based on fundamental ethical values. Such values

include the ability to weigh something right, deep concern towards truth and sincerity to do what is believed to be correct despite having to face external pressure and temptation from within (Puskurbuk, 2011:6). Meanwhile, W. Chrisiana (2005:84) adds that character education teaches habitual ways of thinking and behavior that help individuals to live and work together as a family, community, and state; and help them to make decisions that can be accounted for.

In the Indonesian context, I. Suyitno (2012:8) suggests that education environment should lead to the creation of a family environment laden with religious values, culture, and nationality. P.H. Slamet (2014:334) emphasizes that political education in Indonesia should be able to pick and choose the values that are aligned with the ideology of *Pancasila* (the five basic principles of the Republic of Indonesia), the 1945 Constitution, and the characteristics, wealth, needs, and culture of Indonesia.

In more detail, Puskurbuk (*Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan* or Center of Curriculum and Book), in 2011, has identified and described 18 values derived from religions, *Pancasila*, culture, and national educational objectives, namely: (1) religious, (2) honest, (3) tolerant, (4) discipline, (5) hard working, (6) creative, (7) independent, (8) democratic, (9) having curiosity, (10) having the national spirit, (11) having love to the homeland, (12) appreciating achievement, (13) friendly/communicative, (14) loving peace, (15) fond of reading, (16) caring the environment, (17) caring others, and (18) responsible (cf Puskurbuk, 2011:8; and Kosim, 2011).

In fact, the development of character education had become one of the 100-first day agendas of SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) – Boediono cabinet by piloting the character education program at 125 schools from 16 provinces/districts/cities in 2010. The piloting was carried out for six months with activities that include: socialization, internships, preparation of school-based curriculum documents, and supervision. Along the way, the piloting schools were is upgraded as best practice

schools. The implementation of character education in school-based curriculum was done in various ways, namely integration into subjects (syllabus development and lesson planning); integration into the local content designated by the school or region; and through self-development activities, extracurricular activities, and guidance and counseling services (Puskurbuk, 2011).

From the presentation of best practice schools featured in the implementation guide of character education, and from observation of the author in the model schools in the area where the author lives, it appears that the character education program has brought an alternative atmosphere that can be used as an example by other schools. However, the question raised is why piloting and modeling do not contribute to efforts to tackle the emergency state of this country's education system. After observing further, the author found that the piloting and modeling of character-based education undertaken by the government so far have failed to intervene in the official curriculum.

Although the integration into subjects is the first step in the program, in the lessons outside of character-based subjects (Civics and Religious Education), general character values are not integrated properly. One conclusion in A.H. Siswanto's study (2014) on English subject that implemented character education is that teachers have not fully understood the technicalities of this program. They found themselves just observing the daily behavior of the students and then matched it with 18 characters mentioned in the guidelines of Puskurbuk (Siswanto, 2014). In other words, although the teachers prepared (or copied) the syllabus and lesson plans based on character education in the subjects they taught, they had not understood in depth the correlation between the teaching materials and the character values.

Furthermore, as stated in the previous section about the representation of characters in textbooks, student character development should be done through the official curriculum that leads to the textbooks that are prepared, evaluated or

approved by the government. Meanwhile, character education programs that have been initiated since 2010 should be continued, even if the characteristics of its role as a hidden curriculum covering areas outside the official curriculum. Structuring the character-based official curriculum and textbook can be done through several stages in the level of government, local government, and education units.

At the central level, at least in the medium term the Education Act needs to be revised, in particular related to the conception of the curriculum in order to include not only the official curriculum, but also the planned character education and any possibility of positive things that cannot be predicted in advance, but contribute to the achievement of educational goals (part of the hidden curriculum). The provision is then operated through the development of a basic framework and structure of the curriculum along with the standards required. Curriculum goals or competencies should integrate the various core competencies, such as the conceptual ability, attitude (including a variety of good characters), and skills (including how-to-learn skills and learning assessment).

Furthermore, the preparation of textbooks and teaching materials can be done through various means or simultaneously. In the event that the government still chooses to do the procurement of textbooks or recommends the availability of textbooks nationwide, it should provide space for school choice with the availability of a varied selection of textbooks, so that the books can be selected to accommodate at least some local context. Although a textbook is published nationally, it is recommended that the authors represent various regions, so that most of the materials represent the authentication of the local context. The preparation of textbooks necessarily refers to the provisions of the curriculum, as noted above. Included is a compatibility test with 18 values inventoried by Puskurbuk (2011). If this mechanism is applied, it is predicted that teaching materials, such as those presented in the previous section, will not be passed.

Moreover, along with advances in information technology and the internet, Puskurbuk should display all textbooks to be accessed online and continue to develop online learning home featuring textbook materials or enrichment materials interactively. These materials can then be used by teachers to facilitate adaptation and enrichment (as appropriate). The online space is also necessary to provide a place for innovative teachers to display their material creations to be shared or criticized by colleagues and become input for renewal and procurement of printed textbooks. Thus, the true renewal of curriculum and textbook procurement should run normally, sustainably, and deprived of the intrigue politicization, involving proportionally such main actors as Puskurbuk professionals, university academics, education department professionals, teachers, and practitioners.

CONCLUSION

The fundamental questions have been addressed in this paper with the aim of giving direction for managing the character-based curriculum and textbooks that is expected to answer the challenges of the state of education in Indonesia as identified by the Education Minister, Anies Baswedan, with the word "emergency".

First, the conceptual perception of curriculum should be expanded of a lesson plan on a number of subjects or certain themes into the totality of planning and learning activities based on a number of subjects, themes, and programs of activities that contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the curriculum and pupils' education.

Second, curriculum decision and textbook preparation is made by a mechanism involving various stakeholders of education at least up to the provincial level. The names of the personnel involved should be mentioned in the documents of curriculum and textbooks produced, so that they will have high persuasion. Continuous communication between teachers as users of the curriculum resources with the policymakers, i.e. Puskurbuk (*Pusat*

Kurikulum dan Perbukuan or Center of Curriculum and Book) and education departments, must be woven in a sustainable manner via the availability of the document provider contact details, including phone, email, and web address.

Third, critical study of the textbook excerpts from the 1994 and 2013 curriculum showed Puskurbuk's failure to ensure the availability of positive characters in the official textbooks. Therefore, a character education program has to be integrated in the curriculum revision and preparation of textbooks. Teachers as the users may be asked to develop their critical thinking by examining, adapting, and providing input on the government textbooks used.

However, before the teachers do so, the team of textbook writers should really have carefully reviewed the contents of their books. The involvement of authors from different areas, of course with adequate academic qualifications, can minimize the occurrence of bias. In addition, guidelines on the characters in preparing and reviewing textbooks can also minimize the inclusion of bad moral values that trap learners.¹

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¹*Statement of Originality*: I, the undersigned, declare that this article is my own writing, not a product of plagiarism, and not being sent, reviewed, or published in other scholarly journals.

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