

## CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH PEER ASSESSMENT

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**Abstract:** This paper is aimed at revealing an idea that some positive values that are similar to the traits of character education can be generated through peer assessment. Peer assessment is defined as an assessment which involves the process of reviewing, valuing and giving comments and suggestion toward their peer's work. This way the students subconsciously generate some positive values such as respectful, helping and understanding, confident (self-esteem), independent, persistent, and responsible. Therefore, peer assessment offers academic benefits such as personal accountability, as well as interpersonal and collaborative skills that not only help students academically but also socially as a member of society.

**Keywords:** *peer assessment, character education*

## PENDIDIKAN KARAKTER LEWAT ASESMEN TEMAN SEBAYA

**Abstrak:** Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menyampaikan sebuah pemikiran bahwa beberapa nilai positif yang sama dengan ciri pendidikan karakter dapat ditumbuhkembangkan lewat asesmen rekan sebaya. Asesmen rekan sebaya merupakan sebuah asesmen yang melibatkan proses mereviu, menilai, dan memberikan pendapat atau saran pada hasil karya teman. Dengan cara ini, para siswa secara tidak sadar mengembangkan beberapa nilai positif seperti sikap saling menghormati, tolong-menolong, memahami orang lain, percaya diri, mandiri, ulet, dan bertanggung jawab. Dengan demikian, asesmen rekan sebaya bisa memberikan keuntungan akademis seperti akuntabilitas diri, keterampilan interpersonal dan kolaboratif yang berguna bagi siswa secara akademis dan secara sosial sebagai anggota masyarakat.

**Kata kunci:** *asesmen rekan sebaya, pendidikan karakter*

## INTRODUCTION

Character Education is a movement that inspires schools around the world to foster ethical, responsible, and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character through an emphasis on universal good values. It is the intentional, proactive effort by schools, community, and states to teach their students important core, ethical values such as respect for

self and others, responsibility, integrity, and self-discipline. The notion of Character education arisen as the existence of negative social phenomenon such as student absenteeism, discipline problems, drug abuse, gang violence, teen pregnancy and poor academic performance. In short, character education is an effort to integrate positive values into *every* aspect of the school day.

The notion of character education has awakened scholars to do many efforts to establish it properly. For instance, meetings discussing how to do character education are held, researches upon character education are conducted, articles and books about character education are written and so on.

Ideally character education should be done largely at schools and community involving all people i.e. scholars, instructors, students, parents, government, society, social service staff etc. In small scope, at schools for instance, all schools staffs do serious efforts to emphasis character education. Scholars meet to discuss about curriculum, classroom activities, assessment and typical school environment that support character education. They involve students with activities which provide them with character building experiences. The teacher may also use various instructional techniques which allows them emphasis character building. Also, teachers apply various assessment approaches that allow students to practice good values and character.

As teaching technique and preparing lesson plan, designing assessment is a very normal activity done by teacher. The main function of giving assessment is to figure out how well the students master the lesson that has been taught. Teacher may ask students to answer questions or test, draw pictures, sing a song, fill the blanks, write paragraphs, review their friend's work and so on to see their mastery.

The type of assessment used may be varied. It depends on what purpose the teacher wants to achieve. It can be either formal or informal. Formal assessment is usually a written document such as a test, quiz, or paper. Formal assessment is given a numerical score or grade based on student performance. This type of assessment is used for teacher to have record on students' achievement which later contributes their final score. Meanwhile, informal assessment does not

contribute to a student's final grade. It usually occurs in a more casual manner, including observation, inventories, participation, peer and self evaluation, and discussion

Too many teachers believe that assessment is only used as a process of recording data of students' progress. Only some critical teachers can see assessment as a tool to generate positive learning values that influence the students' character. To generate these positive values the assessment should be used often and repeatedly. Thus, the assessment to be considered is the formative assessment - the assessment that is carried out throughout a course or project as to aid learning- which is in a learning context referred to as 'assessment for learning' instead of 'assessment of learning'.

In an educational setting, formative assessment might be a teacher (or peer) or the learner, providing feedback on a student's work, and would not necessarily be used for grading purposes (Hanna & Dettmer; 2004:135). When the peers provide feedback to each other work's it is called peer assessment. Peer assessment is an assessment in which member of a class give feedback and grade the work or performance of their peers using relevant criteria. In peer assessment marks may be awarded by students or negotiated with teachers. (Falchikov, 2001:18). In short, Peer assessment involves the students to review, value and give comments and suggestions towards their peer's work.

Peer Assessment is believed to improve students' academic achievement as well as interpersonal skills. It is found that through the process of reviewing and discussing one's work with their peer, students train themselves not only academically but also socially. In line with this Sheppard (2000:124) states about an emergent constructivist paradigm in which close assessment of students' understandings, feedback from peer would be a central part of the *social processes* that mediate the development of intellectual abilities, construction of knowledge (both are academically), and formation of students' identities (socially). Thus, peer assessment can be

considered as a social process that mediate the development of intellectual abilities, construction of knowledge and formation of students' identities.

Therefore, in the new perspective of involving character education in school curriculum, teachers may consider to apply peer assessment as it is compatible with and supporting this new perspective. Through peer assessment students may form their identities as some positive values are generated in themselves. Peer assessment allows students to train themselves to be respectful, helping and understanding (cooperative), confident, independent, persistent, responsible and autonomous. As these positive values generated through peer assessment, students' character are changed into active and responsive learner rather than passive learner as well as into autonomous learner rather than depended learner. These changes bear great influences to the students' identity in the sense that they bring these characters not only in their academic life but also their social life as human beings who are autonomous, independent, cooperative, responsive, etc

The basic aim of this article is to discuss the notion of character education as well as to introduce the idea that peer assessment can generate some positive values which greatly influence students' character into favorable human beings. The followings are the notion of character education, and the discussion on how some positive values that are similar to the traits of character education can be generated through peer assessment.

## **THE NOTION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION**

### **The Definition of Character Education**

David (2004:1) states that all people are actually character educators already, whether they are teacher, administrator, custodian, or school bus driver, they are helping to shape the character of the kids they come in contact with. It is in the way they talk, the behavior they model, the deeds they encourage, the expectation they transmit. Thus, it simply about whatever people do to teach their kids good values.

However, to put it more specifically let us take a look on Lickona's definition of Character Education. Lickona (1991) states that "**character education** is the deliberate effort to

help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values.” Furthermore, he asserts that when people think about the kind of character they want for their children, it’s clear that they want them to be able to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right, and then do what they believe to be right—even in the face of pressure from without and temptation from within.

The benefits of character education as it is cited from the *Character Education Informational Handbook and Guide(2002)* are as follows.

- It promotes character development through the exploration of ethical issues across the curriculum.
- It develops a positive and moral climate by engaging the participation of students, teachers and staff, parents, and communities.
- It teaches how to solve conflicts fairly, creating safer schools that are free of intimidation, fear, and violence, and are more conducive to learning.

### **The Components of Character Education**

After more than a decade of experience with diverse communities, educators learned that these components are critical to the lasting success of character education. These components are cited from *Character Education Informational Handbook and Guide(2002:4)*:

- **Community participation.** Have educators, parents, students, and members of the community invest themselves in a consensus-building process to discover common ground that is essential for long-term success.
- **Character education policy.** Make character education a part of your philosophy, goal or mission statement by adopting a formal policy. Don’t just say it—put it in writing.
- **Defined traits.** Have a meeting of parents, teachers and community representatives and use consensus to get agreement on which character traits to reinforce and what definitions to use. Formally state what your school means by “courage” or “perseverance” before they are discussed with students.

- **Integrated curriculum.** Make character education integral to the curriculum at all grade levels. Take the traits you have chosen and connect them to classroom lessons, so students see how a trait might figure into a story or be part of a science experiment or how it might affect them. Make these traits a part of every class and every subject.
- **Experiential learning.** Allow your students to see the trait in action, experience it and express it. Include community-based, real-world experiences in your curriculum that illustrate character traits (e.g., service learning, cooperative learning and peer mentoring). Allow time for discussion and reflection.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluate character education from two perspectives: (1) Is the program affecting positive changes in student behavior, academic achievement and cognitive understanding of the traits? (2) Is the implementation process providing the tools and support teachers need?
- **Adult role models.** Children “learn what they live,” so it is important that adults demonstrate positive character traits at home, school and in the community. If adults do not model the behavior they teach, the entire program will fail.
- **Staff development.** Provide development and training time for your staff so that they can create and implement character education on an ongoing basis. Include time for discussion and understanding of both the process and the programs, as well as for the creation of lesson plans and curricula.
- **Student involvement.** Involve students in age-appropriate activities and allow them to connect character education to their learning, decision-making and personal goals as you integrate the process into their school.
- **Sustaining the program.** The character education program is sustained and renewed through implementation of the first nine elements, with particular attention to a high level of commitment from the top: adequate funding; support for district coordination staff; high quality and ongoing professional development; and a networking and support system for teachers who are implementing the program.

## HOW TO DO CHARACTER EDUCATION

There are probably many ways offered by experts on character education. Lickona (1991:10) believes that a developmental process that involves knowledge, feelings, and action is required to provide an integrated foundation on which to structure a coherent and comprehensive Character Education effort. Thus, scholars need to engage kids in activities that make them think critically about moral and ethical questions, inspire them to become committed to moral and ethical actions, and give them ample opportunities to practice moral and ethical behavior.

Another approach is called Holistic Approach. Berkowitz as cited in *Character Education Informational Handbook and Guide* (2002:2) states that effective character education is not adding a program or set of programs to a school. Rather it is a transformation of the culture and life of the school. This is called Holistic approach that integrates character development into every aspect of school life. Here are some of the distinguishing features of the holistic model:

- Everything in the school is organized around the development of relationships between and among students, staff, and community.
- The school is a caring community of learners in which there is a palpable bond connecting the students, the staff, and the school.
- Social and emotional learning is emphasized as much as academic learning.
- Cooperation and collaboration among students are emphasized over competition.
- Values such as fairness, respect, and honesty are part of everyday lessons in and out of the classroom.
- Students are given ample opportunities to practice moral behavior through activities such as service learning (see below).
- Discipline and classroom management concentrate on problem-solving rather than rewards and punishments.
- The old model of the teacher-centered classroom is abandoned in favor of democratic classrooms where teachers and students hold class meetings to build unity, establish norms, and solve problems.

And if it is a way too difficult to restructure school environment and habit as a caring community, then there are still many activities that scholars can do to provide students with

meaningful character building experiences. The activities can be done in the classroom so that the students can play an active role in shaping the culture and environment of the classroom, as well as of the school at large. These activities are using Smorgasboard Approach. Here are the activities that can be done to build character.

- Hold class meetings in which students establish group goals, decide on rules of conduct, plan activities, and solve problems.
- Have your students collaborate on academic tasks by working in cooperative learning groups. Give them regular opportunities to plan and reflect on the ways they work together.
- Organize a Buddies program in which younger and older students get together to work one-on-one on academic tasks and other kinds of activities.
- Teach conflict resolution and other social skills so that students become skilled at resolving conflicts fairly and peacefully.
- These strategies help students learn to establish and maintain positive relationships with others. They also turn the school into a laboratory where students practice the kinds of roles, and cope with the kinds of challenges, they will face in later life (Schaps, et.al, 2001).

Besides, the above approaches, scholar can also teach values through the curriculum. For example, teacher of literature may discuss about character in the story or moral values found in a poem. In science class students can be asked to discuss about ethical issues of things like genetic testing or the use of animals in research.

And the last approach is direct approach. This approach means teaching the students about character education explicitly. The direct approach is to teach it as a subject in itself, by creating specific character education lesson plans. This approach is often organized around a list of specifically named virtues like respect, responsibility, integrity, etc., and typically involves the kids in reading, writing, discussing, role playing, and other kinds of activities that help them understand and apply these values.

## PEER ASSESSMENT IN CHARACTER EDUCATION

Hanna & Dettmer (2004:3) states that assessment includes all the systematic ways teacher gather information in their classroom. It includes the full range of methods that teachers use to collect data for help with decision making –from scores on paper-pencil tests to assessment of products and portfolios to systematic performance assessment to formal and informal observation and interviews.

Assessment can be done by involving self-assessment and peer assessment. Peer assessment is different from self-assessment in that students make assessment decisions on other students' work. This can include almost any aspect of student performance, including essays, reports, presentations, etc. Student peer-assessment can be anonymous or otherwise, with assessors randomly chosen so that friendship factors are less likely to distort the results. Peer-assessment helps students to gain feedback from each other, and thus improve the quality of their work. It can also be summative, and taken into account as a component of the overall assessment.

The idea of working with Peer assessment in the classroom is not for no reason. If we take a look again at the above list of activities based on Smorgasboard approach, we will find that the list shows activities that are actually done in Peer Assessment. To have a better understanding of how peer assessment is done the followings are some principles of doing peer assessment (Hoque, 2008; Utami, 2010:69-72 ).

1. The teacher set a rubric or a review guideline to be used as a reference later by the students so that they know what to assess, what is right and wrong. Moreover, it will help them to concern on some important points and focus their attention. Having the guidelines in their own hand they may have self or independent learning which is more relax and less-pressured. If students do this frequently students will have sensitivity toward what good work should have without much pressure from teacher.
2. The teacher makes sure that the students understand the target of each component in the rubric. This can be done by providing a training session of reviewing. All students will

learn about the goal or the target of the assignment, how to review and how to give value. Without this training session, learners might be overwhelmed or frustrated by task intricacy.

3. The student are assigned to do particular assignment.
4. After finish doing the assignment, the teacher help them swap their work and make sure to hide the identity of the creator perhaps by writing only the initial of the creator's name.
5. The students start reviewing and giving comments or suggestion on their peer's work.
6. The students then decide the value of the work based on the rubric of assessment provided.
7. The reviewer and the creator then discussed about the strengths and the weaknesses of the work. They also find solution or ways to revise the work into a more appropriate one. In this process the students learn to use their interpersonal skill such as arguing, stating opinion, refusing, respecting other's opinion. They learn collaboratively and maintain a positive ad friendly atmosphere of learning.
8. The teacher may help if necessary, especially if the students can't decide what is the right thing or how to revise or solve the problem. The teacher can facilitate the students to solve problem fairly and peacefully by conducting a class conference that involving all students and teacher to solve particular problem or to highlight particular concept learn from mistakes done by the students. In other words class conference is important for this gives time foe teacher and students to discuss about their opinion, comment or confusion about their work.

The above procedures are not an exact sequence. Any scholars may add or reduce the step based on the purpose of the lesson she taught. However, whatever changes made, Peer Assessment is all about involving students in assessing their peer's work.

There are many advantages that can be earned from conducting peer assessment. One of them, as stated by Ahmad (Utami, 2010:93) is creating a challenging and friendly atmosphere. Students find it easier to accept feedback from a fellow student (rather than the teacher all the

time) and this in turn builds confidence as students can see it is possible to complete the given task.

This friendly situation is actually very beneficial for students, since it will create a very relaxed learning atmosphere. In line with this, Hoque (2008) believes that language acquisition does not happen unless the learner is relaxed and keen on learning. Moreover, peer assessment allow students to be less-pressured since they realize that making mistake is a natural thing. Thus, the students will become receptive and responsive and have no fear to make mistake. the way peer assessment creates such friendly and challenging atmosphere simultaneously enhances students' external motivation in learning, which is suspected may improve students' achievement. Another advantages are stated by Topping (1998:260) who asserts that "peer assessment can enhance self-assessment, and both can yield metacognitive gains."

- Increased student responsibility and autonomy, also evaluative skill development.
- insight into assessment procedures and expectations for high quality work.
- students work harder with the knowledge that they will be assessed by their peers.
- potential for providing increased levels of feedback without increased demands on tutors; and encourages deep rather than surface learning.
- Giving a sense of ownership of the assessment process and improving motivation.
- Treating assessment as part of learning so that mistakes are seen as opportunities rather than failures.
- Practising the transferable skills needed for life-long learning particularly related to evaluation skills.
- Using external evaluation to provide a model for internal self-assessment of a student's own learning (metacognition).

Besides those advantages which beneficial for students' academic achievement, Peer Assessment also subconsciously train their interpersonal skill such as being understanding, and respectful especially in communicating their thought and opinion. Moreover, students are practically autonomous and responsible for their own learning i.e. they do their assignment

autonomously, they read books that helped them to improve their performance, they seek for any assistant from others to help them improve. They do those thing since they feel being engaged in the assessment.

From the above explanation, it is obvious that through peer assessment students will improve their knowledge as well as their interpersonal skill which is very important for them to play their role as a part of society.

### **THE PARALLELISM OF PEER ASSESSMENT AND EIGHT TRAITS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION**

The *Character Education Informational Handbook and Guide* (2002: 15) mentions about the eight traits of character education for inclusion in character education instruction, they are:

1. **Courage.** Having the determination to do the right thing even when others don't; having the strength to follow your conscience rather than the crowd; attempting difficult things that are worthwhile.
2. **Good Judgement.** Choosing worthy goals and setting proper priorities; thinking through the consequences of your actions; and basing decisions on practical wisdom and good sense.
3. **Integrity.** Having the inner strength to be truthful, trustworthy, and honest in all things; acting justly and honorably.
4. **Kindness** Being considerate, courteous, helpful, and understanding of others; showing care, compassion, friendship, and generosity; and treating others as you would like to be treated.
5. **Perseverance.** Being persistent in the pursuit of worthy objectives in spite of difficulty, opposition, or discouragement; and exhibiting patience and having the fortitude to try again when confronted with delays, mistakes, or failures.
6. **Respect.** Showing high regard for authority, for other people, for self, for property, and for country; and understanding that all people have value as human beings.

7. **Responsibility.** Being dependable in carrying out obligations and duties; showing reliability and consistency in words and conduct; being accountable for your own actions; and being committed to active involvement in your community.
8. **Self-Discipline.** Demonstrating hard work and commitment to purpose; regulating yourself for improvement and restraining from inappropriate behaviors; being in proper control of your words, actions, impulses, and desires; choosing abstinence from premarital sex, drugs, alcohol, and other harmful substances and behaviors; and doing your best in all situations.

In parallel with those eight traits above, Peer Assessment also offers similar positive values such as:

1. Confident in stating opinion or give comments (courage). Assigning the students to review their peer's work "forces" them to learn the required concept to be able to review and give comments or suggestion on their peer's work. To do this the students are trained to be confident stating their opinion or comments i.e. what they think is right or appropriate and what they think should be or should not be done.
2. Good judgment. In reviewing process the students think about whether the work is good, appropriate or need to be revised. They also need to decide in what way the work should be revised and how much value the work worth.
3. Honest and Objective (integrity). In reviewing the friendship factor is tried to be avoided to maintain the objectivity. This is by assigning the students to review a work without they know who the creator is. This will be done until they finished reviewing. They are going to be told later the creator of the work so that finally they can talk more deeply about the work. This process teaches the students to be objective and to be honest with what they think without being influenced by intimacy or friendship.
4. Helping and understanding (Kindness). After reviewing the students (both the reviewer and the creator of the work) are given time to discuss orally about the work. The reviewer may tell what he thinks, what should be done or what strength of the work is having. The creator will be listening and perhaps giving additional comments or reasons why he does the work in a particular way. Also, peer involvement in assessment helps students to learn

not only from their mistakes but from the mistakes of others and makes economical and efficient use of the students' and the teacher's time (Falchikov, 2001:56). Both of the party will try to share knowledge they have based on the concepts or books they have read. In short, peer assessment let the students help each other on particular concept.

5. Persistent in learning (perseverance). The students automatically update their knowledge every time they have discussion session with their friends. Besides that, during the process of reviewing the student may learn from one's mistakes and strengths. They also have great motivation to read books to justify the concept they perceived before, since they know that the knowledge will be valuable to share with their friends.
6. Respect. Again throughout the process of reviewing and assessing the students build up the feeling that everyone has value and opinion that they need to respect.
7. Autonomous learner (Responsible). Each of the students are given responsibility to review, to give comments or suggestion upon their peer's work. They also become responsible with their own learning such as reading books, asking teacher or friends to improve their knowledge to be able to review one's work. Moreover, Teo (2006) states that active involvement of students in the process of dealing with mistakes is important: it stimulates active learning; induces cooperative atmosphere; and develops autonomous learners.
8. Independent (Self-Discipline). Since peer assessment involves the students in assessing their peer's work, the class becomes more students-centered rather than teacher-centered. The students learn more independently by given responsibility to do assignment and to review each other's work. Hoque (2008) states that students should be given chance very frequently to correct each other work, which is very important because 'self-correction or peer assessment help to focus student attention on the errors and to reduce reliance on the teacher.

Moreover, as cited in the handbook of character education, Berkowitz mentions four supported practices to do character education. They are (1) Promoting student autonomy and influence; (2) Student participation, discussion, and collaboration; (3) Social skills training; (4) Helping and social service behavior. Again, these four practices can be also found in the

implementation of Peer Assessment. By conducting peer assessment students are changed into independent and autonomous learner. The students work together in a discussion; help each other to solve the problem or to revise the inappropriateness in their work. Furthermore, automatically students practices their interpersonal skills which is one of social skills that aims at having a good social relation in the society. The students practices their communication and interpersonal skills such as arguing, giving opinion, refusing and respecting others. And the last, the students basically trained to help each other to learn. They subconsciously trained their social service behavior. The students review their peer's work without thinking about any personal advantage. They do it because they feel responsible for it.

## **CONCLUSION**

As it has been discussed in the previous pages, clearly peer assessment can help students to improve their academic achievement as well as to generate some positive values in themselves. Peer assessment can be considered as a great tool to teach character education since students engage in collaborative learning and discussion. The students learn how to respect and value; to be independent and responsible with their own learning; to be persistent in learning; to be helpful and understanding etc. These positive values generated by Peer Assessment do not stop only inside the classroom; instead, the students bring them along as they live their life as member of society. And living socially in real life setting with these positive characters is the most important target because a great intellectual is a little value before it is added with integrity, respect, responsibility and other positive values.

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