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CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR 21ST CENTURY GLOBAL CITIZENS

ROUTLEDGE

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Character Education for 21st Century Global Citizens

Editors

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Cultivating character in junior high school students through the subject of Islamic religious education

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ABSTRACT: Character education can be conducted through various methods, one being the provision of adequate textbooks to support the smooth process of learning in the classroom. This study aims to review the payload of the textbook *Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti* (Islamic Religious Education and Character) in developing the character of junior high school students in Indonesia in the context of the guidelines for the implementation of the Indonesian national curriculum of 2013. This research is a content analysis in relation to the curriculum, and the sample is the Student Book of *Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti* for Class VII. Data collection involved documentation techniques supported by interviews. Data analysis used content analysis techniques with steps of data collection, sampling (unit of analysis), data recording, data reduction, results description, and conclusion drawing. The research concluded that the textbook *Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti* for junior high school already contains material that can develop the character of junior high school students, and many of the character values sought already grow and flourish among junior high school students as a result of this book.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background*

Education plays a very big role in national development. The direction and purpose of education programs in a country will align with the direction and purpose of the state and nation and a state's success in implementing development depends on the success of its education program.

Experts, such as Lapsley (2008), have concluded that the moral formation of children is one of the foundational goals of formal education, and there has been increasing recognition that neighborhoods and communities play critical roles in inducting children into the moral and civic norms that govern human social life. Saeed (2007) has argued that education acts as a key to changing attitudes: in the case of Islam, it was the Islamic world view, with its positive views or biases, prejudices, and suspicions of other systems, that colored the attitudes that believers adopted.

Tilaar (2009) stated that an independent Indonesian was an Indonesian who can realize their personality or morals in an Indonesian nation based on Indonesian culture. In this context, national education is a process of Indonesian human liberation. As an independent nation, Indonesian people should not be swept along by the flow of globalization or just stand idly by and be ignorant of the big changes in everyday life, but must be aware of being persons who have an identity as an Indonesian nation. The occurrence of changes in national education policy can be assessed through policy analysis, that is, analysis that makes generalizations or presents information in such a way as to improve the basis on which policy makers evaluate their decisions (Assegaf, 2005).

Within a period of one decade (2003–2013), there have been various national policies on education, as outlined in various pieces of national legislation on the subject, ranging from laws, government regulations, and regulations of the Ministry of National Education, to decrees of the Ministry of National Education. Through these various legislative products

we can analyze national policies related to education in Indonesia from a variety of aspects or areas of emerging policy, as well as the background that accompanies their emergence. In 2013 the government of Indonesia imposed a new curriculum, the 2013 curriculum. Up until 2016, the government of Indonesia had gradually introduced this curriculum through various efforts, such as the issuing of various laws and regulations that supported the smooth implementation of this curriculum to various facilities and infrastructure, and created the implementation manuals and textbooks to be used in the learning process of the 2013 curriculum for both students and for teachers.

In the 2013 curriculum the minimum materials and competencies to be achieved were established for each level of education, ranging from elementary school (*Sekolah Dasar/SD* or *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah/MI*) to high school (senior high school – *Sekolah Menengah Atas/SMA* or *Madrasah Aliyah/MA*; vocational high school – *Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/SMK*). The competencies to be achieved at each level include spiritual attitudes, social attitudes, knowledge and skills. The two initial competencies (spiritual and social attitudes) are closely related to character values. Thus, the 2013 curriculum is very concerned with the issue of character development in students.

One of the supports in the implementation of the 2013 curriculum is a special textbook prepared by the government for all subjects at all levels of education from elementary school to high school. The existence of textbooks is crucial in the implementation of the 2013 curriculum, so the government made it policy that this textbook must be used by students and teachers in the 2013 curriculum. The textbook had been prepared by the government, although other textbooks may also be used to support and complement it. The success of curriculum enforcement is not only based on textbooks, but is also supported by other factors, especially teachers. Teachers play an important role in the success of the classroom learning process. Saeed (2007) confirmed that teachers have several roles, including the facilitation of critical discussion of an issue, the exploration of links between the issue and society, and not seeking one correct answer but exploring all possible aspects of the associated problems.

1.2 *Research questions*

This research will focus on the study of this textbook of Islamic Religious Education and Character (*Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti*) in junior high school (or middle school: *Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP*) and whether the textbook can foster the character of the student through its content and messages. It will examine the character values contained in *Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dan Budi Pekerti* in junior high school and how they are presented. These questions will be examined through content analysis research in the hope that the results will be beneficial to the parties concerned with the implementation of the 2013 curriculum and to activists for character education.

Based on this background, the research questions can be formulated as follows. The first question is, what are the contents of the government textbook of Islamic Religious Education and Character that can foster the desired characteristics of junior high school students in Indonesia? The second question concerns how the implementation of the 2013 curriculum is able to foster the character of junior high school students in Indonesia through this textbook of Islamic Religious Education and Character.

1.3 *Meaning of character education*

Education, which is an agent of change, should be able to improve the character of the nation. In other words, education should be able to carry out the mission of character building, so that learners can participate in the fulfillment of national development in the future without losing these character values.

To underpin the study of these issues, it is necessary to understand some important concepts related to character education. Thomas Lickona (1991) described character as “A reliable inner disposition to respond to situations in a morally good way.” He added: “Character so conceived has three interrelated parts: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior.”

Thus, character refers to a set of knowledge (cognitives), attitudes, and motivations, as well as behaviors and skills, and character education consists of three main elements: knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good (Lickona, 1991; Alberta, 2005). Character education does not just teach what is right and what is wrong; character education inculcates habituation about the good so that students understand good, are able to feel it, and want to do it. The concept of character education has, at times, been understood as being interchangeable with the concept of moral education (Qoyyimah, 2016; Hill, 1991; Lickona, 1996), and character education thus involves the same mission as moral education.

Frye et al. (2002, p. 2) defined character education as “A national movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible, and caring young people by modeling and teaching good character through an emphasis on universal values that we all share.” Thus, character education should be a national movement for the cultivation of values of noble character through learning and modeling.

1.4 *Character building of students in school*

Noble character needs to be habituated, and the realization of noble character as the ultimate goal of an educational process is highly coveted by every institution that organizes such processes. The culture that exists in institutions, whether schools, colleges, or others, plays an important role in building noble character among the academic community employed or taught therein.

To realize noble character in the life of every person, the habituation of noble character is necessary. This is achieved in schools or educational institutions through the provision of subjects of moral education, ethics education, or character education. Lately in Indonesia, this mission has been carried out through two main subjects, namely Religious Education and Civic Education. Following the Act of Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 on a National Education System, and its reinforcement by Government Regulation of Republic of Indonesia No. 19 of 2005 on National Education Standards (RoI, 2005), the government decreed that each subject group be implemented holistically such that the learning of each subject group influences the understanding and/or appreciation of the learner (RoI, 2005, article 6, para. 4). Fostering the character of students in schools refers to the various efforts undertaken by a school in order to form the character of students, and the establishment of an appropriate school culture is now encouraged in schools.

1.5 *Islamic religious education in school*

Religious education is an integral part of the implementation of education conducted in formal educational institutions in Indonesia, and is also part of national education. In article 3 of Act No. 20 of 2003 on a National Education System (RoI, 2003), it was reiterated that the national educational function was to develop the ability and form the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to develop the nation's life. The purpose of Indonesian national education is to develop the potential of learners to become human beings who believe in and are respectful of God, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and who become democratic and responsible citizens.

As part of Indonesian national education, religious education has a very important and strategic role in the realization of its functions and objectives. Religious education, especially Islamic religious education, has a huge role and responsibility in realizing national education goals, especially when it comes to preparing learners to understand the teachings of religion, the variety of knowledge learned, and its implementation in everyday life. Theologically, Islamic education has a philosophy that is different from any other education, because Islamic education bases its fundamental principles on the Qur'an and the Hadith. Islamic education is as old as Islam itself and its history shows conceptual, ideological, and structural diversification (Niyozov & Memon, 2011). Through Islamic education, the basis of Islam (Islamic theology, Islamic law, and Islamic morals) can be transferred to other education, including science, humanism, and laws of nature. Amjad Hussain (2010) said that “Islamic

education for Muslims is just an element of the wider Islamic theology where primacy of science and autonomous human and secular reality are non-existent". There are basic principles in Islamic education that are contained in the term *tarbiyah* (Qur'an Surah 17:24), which indicates that Islamic education involves nurturing and caring for the child. *Ta'lim* (Q.S. 96:4-5) explicitly indicates that one of the purposes of Islamic education is to impart knowledge, and *ta'dib* fully demonstrates the importance of the three parts of human existence that Islam upholds: the mind, the body, and the soul. As the prophet Muhammad said, "My Lord educated me, and so made my education most excellent" (Hussain, 2010; Hussain, 2004; Cook, 1999; Halstead, 2004; Pohl, 2009).

Realizing the goals of religious education as described above is not easy. Many things must be considered, from the materials, management, methodology, facilities and infrastructure, to educators and learners. As one of the subjects in school, Islamic Religious Education and Character should strive to follow developments and demands of the times so as to carry out the general national education mission and Islamic education, in particular.

A curriculum for Islamic education in Indonesia should be arranged better than before. If implemented well in the educational system, this curriculum helps to produce learners who are spiritually, physically, intellectually and emotionally strong and balanced, making for a more dynamic and progressive generation. Thus, the curriculum of Islamic education needs to be planned well, requiring comprehensive preparation while paying careful attention to details and aspects of practicality (Lubis et al., 2010).

2 METHOD

2.1 *Types of research*

In terms of approach, this research is qualitative descriptive research based on library research (Zed, 2004). In terms of analytical techniques, this research is based on content analysis, which is a form of research conducted with the aim of exploring the contents or the meaning of symbolic messages in a book or other work (Krippendorff, 2004).

2.2 *Population and sample*

The population for this research is all of the policies concerned with the implementation of the 2013 curriculum in Indonesia. The sample for the research is the textbook of Islamic Religious Education and Character (*PAI dan Budi Pekerti*) in relation to junior high school (SMP). Not all of the contents of the manuscripts will be reviewed, but only what relates to the effort to develop the character of junior high school students. Specifically, the research sample is the Student Book for Junior High School, Class VII of *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* (RoI, 2014).

2.3 *Data collection techniques*

The data collection technique used in this research is a documentation technique, given that all of the manuscripts used as research data have been documented either through print media (in book form) or electronic media (stored in files on internet). Another technique used is that of library research, because the data is also captured in books stored in the library. To complete the research data, the researcher also used interviewing techniques with people who were specifically associated with the writing of these texts, as well as with the users of the book.

2.4 *Data analysis*

The collected data was then selected and analyzed by qualitative analysis based on content analysis. The technique used was a cognitive map technique that describes the location of several concepts and the nature of the relationship between them (Krippendorff, 2004).

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *Developing the character of junior high school students through PAI dan Budi Pekerti textbook*

As it relates to the specificities of the 2013 curriculum, which emphasizes character education, the textbook *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* adequately meets the curriculum requirements, although there are still some concerns. The authors of the book seek to incorporate the basic principles of character education within, for example, in the presentation of the material in each chapter.

Using a methodical approach, the authors consistently begin by inviting the reader (learners) to observe the various phenomena of human life through a limited number of images (two to four). Before inviting additional observations, the authors invite reflection tailored to the messages contained in each chapter or study topic. With the invitation to reflect upon and observe the pictures, the authors hope to encourage character in the reader (learners) in accordance with the messages conveyed. Following on from this observation and contemplation, the writers then present description of the material to completion.

Based on the pictures that form the objects of observation, the messages to learners to grow and develop certain characteristics are not very clear. The pictures are more directed at familiarization with the topics to be discussed, rather than leading to certain characteristics in the reader. There are some clear pictures of messages about noble character, but only a few. This is understandable given the limitation of places to explore the wider picture until the messages about the desired character have been clearly illustrated.

In each part of the description (subsection) of the existing topics, the authors begin by inviting the learners to exhibit noble character. This can be seen in the title and introduction of each chapter or subsection, where there are many sentences in the form of a call-to-action or statement that contain an exhortation to display a given characteristic, such as “*Mari Berperilaku Jujur*” (“Let’s behave honestly”), “*Mari Berperilaku Amanah*” (“Let’s be trustworthy”), and “*Mari Berperilaku Istiqamah*” (“Let’s be steadfast”), in addition to other titles that are not invitations. Titles like this have large significance in the growth of the character of the learners who read them. Before the learner reads the detailed content of the textbook, the idea has been placed in their mind that they are invited to behave commendably, as described in the titles. Although the description of the material may indicate expected characteristics, not all such characteristics are clearly illustrated in the material.

The character values revealed in the book are many. Almost all of the material presented reflects important character values that the book is attempting to induce in the everyday behavior of learners. Comparing these with the main character values developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, almost all of the latter values (18 of them) are contained in the *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* textbook, although the values are not always expressed in the same terms. However, if the number of character values addressed in *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* were identified and counted, the number is greater than those identified by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Another aspect of *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* associated with the development of the character of learners is the model or method used in presenting the material. If we examine the content of the material presented in each chapter and subsection of the textbook, we can identify two models or modes of character education, namely inclusion (advice and motivation) and modeling (Kirschenbaum, 1995; Zuchdi, 2012).

3.2 *Content of PAI dan Budi Pekerti textbook*

The character education content in *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* is also quite clearly visible, although not yet entirely clear and perfect. Clarity in character education in *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* can be seen in its content in terms of five aspects of Islamic Studies, namely *Akidah* (Islamic Theology), *Akhlak* (Islamic Morality), *Syariah* (Islamic Law), *Sejarah Islam* (Islamic History), and *Al-Quran-Hadis* (Quran—Tradition). The authors of *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* seem to

have tried to follow the principles of good book writing and book development in the context of the 2013 curriculum, which emphasizes strengthening character education.

From the interview with one of the authors of *PAI dan Budi Pekerti*, Muhammad Ahsan (16 October 2016), it appears that the book is written in accordance with the principles of character education emphasized in the 2013 curriculum. He asserted that the contents of character education in *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* are adequate, in terms of the characteristics of both spiritual attitudes and social attitudes. Presentations in *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* have also been pursued in accordance with the principles of true learning that can foster the characters of the students themselves.

Dr. Muhammad Kosim, Mag., one of the national instructors (interview, 31 October 2016), asserted that the contents of *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* are in line with the principles developed in the 2013 curriculum in terms of developing the character of learners. He declared that the content of the book had been loaded with adequate character education in each chapter, especially at the beginning of the subsection “*Renungkanlah*” (“Meditate”), and at the end that gave rise to the “*Cerita*” (“Stories”) that were exemplary in character. According to Kirschenbaum (1995), one of the most effective methods for cultivating the character of students is inculcation and facilitation, for example, by providing motivation and assignment to behave with certain characteristics. It is also part of the revitalization of religious education in schools (Marzuki, 2013).

4 CONCLUSION

From the research findings described above and the discussion, the conclusion is that the textbook of Islamic Education and Character (*PAI dan Budi Pekerti*) for junior high school (SMP) already contains materials that can develop the character of junior high school students. It seeks to develop and grow many character values among junior high school students, such as honesty, discipline, obedience, sympathy, respect for others, and so on.

The presentation of the material in this book has implemented recognized models or methods of character education, especially those of inculcation and modeling. This is in line with the principles developed in the 2013 curriculum. Nevertheless, there are still some weaknesses in *PAI dan Budi Pekerti* that need to be refined, for example, in the presentation of facilitation models and the development of special skills related to *PAI dan Budi Pekerti*, and in motivating students to gain character through evaluation and assignment.

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