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Culture-based character education in a national character education course

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ABSTRACT: Character education in the History Education Study Program, Social Science Faculty, *Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta* (UNY) uses a monolithic approach, meaning that character education is presented as a stand-alone course and is not integrated into other relevant courses by the name of National Character Education. National Character Education courses held in the History Education Study Program are developed with activity-based learning, meaning that the learning process in order to plant, practice, and habituate these values is conducted through selected and designed activities, in addition to the presentation of concepts via lecture, question and answer, and other learning methods. Lectures are started by: (1) stipulation of the lecture contract building hope and commitment; (2) finding and determining prioritized words of wisdom, which are obtained from community figures of Yogyakarta, and placing them in classrooms and strategic places on campus; (3) students observing and relating examples of goodness in the surrounding environment (storytelling); (4) lecturers noting goodness in their environment and stating it; (5) developing an appreciative atmosphere; (6) improving the cleanliness and tidiness of the classroom; (7) starting the lecture by praying; (8) having concern for problems in society and the victims of disaster; (9) watching character education films together; (10) reflection—building habits of introspection or self-examination, and encouraging all class members to improve virtue and improve honesty to one's self.

1 INTRODUCTION

Post-independence education in Indonesia has experienced many changes and developments. Education that was previously colonial-centric, prioritizing the interests and needs of colonial government, changed its orientation and aimed to educate the nation under the mandate contained in the preamble of the constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945. In Act No. 20 of 2003 on National Education System, Article 3 asserts that “National education functions to develop the ability and form the character and civilization of dignified nation in order to educate the nation's life, aims to develop the potential of learners to become human beings who believe and piety to God Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become a democratic and responsible citizen”. From this, it can be seen that national education holds a significant function—to build a whole human being who has good character values, in addition to having faith and devotion. Therefore, education becomes an agent of change which must hold national character building.

Nowadays, character education has become the priority of national policy. Government, through the Ministry of National Education, has proclaimed the implementation of character education for all education levels, from elementary school to higher education (Zuchdi, 2010). The development of character education that consists of moral and religious values is increasingly recognized as an urgent need, given that cognitive intelligence alone does not guarantee someone's success (Kneller, 1964).

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Building a continuous balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects is the most important. In Lickona's view (1991), education is a process involving efforts to develop three aspects of ones' life, which are life view, life attitude, and life skill. Education can be described as civilizing or as "enculturation", which is a process to enable someone to live in a certain culture. Later, Zamroni (2002) stated that education is a process that takes place in a certain culture. There are many values of culture and its orientation that can inhibit and encourage education. Also, there are many culture values that can be utilized consciously in the education process. Dewantara (1977b), also reminded that in overcoming this culture, it takes a guarded attitude in choosing which one is good to add to the glory of life and which is not profitable.

Character education in higher education, particularly in the History Learning Study Program, Social Science Faculty, *Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta* (UNY), necessary to instill self and personality concept and equip prospective teachers with learning insights through integrated character education. With regard to the integration of character education into history learning, history itself is a subject that includes historical contents as a study object for the students to learn and explore various historical stories of the process of the formation of NKRI (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia/Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia). The development of an appropriate character education integrated model in history learning can provide an alternative solution to restoring the spirit of nationalism, loving the homeland, fighting spirit, confidence, the spirit of unity and entity.

2 EDUCATION AND CULTURE

According to Dewantara (1964), culture is the result of human mind. Culture is the result of human efforts toward two strong influences, which are nature and times (nature and society). In culture, there is evidence of the glory of human life to overcome various obstacles and difficulties in life and living in order to reach safety and happiness, which is essentially orderly and peaceful. As a result of the struggle of human life that lives in the same character, same age, and same society, culture is always national (national) and manifests the nation's personality (national independence).

The purpose of the culture itself is actually to preserve and advance human life toward civilization. Culture in its existence sometimes experiences cult (worship), and often experiences "frozen life" in the sense that it does not develop (Dewantara, 1951a). Therefore, Dewantara reminded us that people have cultures that consider several important things such as: (1) maintaining culture with the aim to promote and adjust culture with every turn of nature and the times; (2) "exile" (isolation) of culture causing decline and death, thus there must be a connection between culture and society; (3) the renewal of culture also needs the connection with other cultures that can develop (promote perfect) or enrich (add) to our own culture; (4) putting in other cultures that are incompatible with the environment and time, even to the replacement of cultures that violate the demands of environmental and community conditions will always be harmful; (5) cultural progress must be a direct continuation of its own culture (*kontinuitet*), moving toward the unity of world culture (convergence), and continuing to have personality traits within the world humanitarian environment (*konsentrisitet*).

Indonesian culture, according to Dewantara (1977a), is originally a collection of regional cultures, therefore we must mobilize to become a unity of culture for all people. Local cultures in Indonesia are not impossible to incorporate into cultural unity because basically the areas in the archipelago have the same nature, history, society, and the times; hence according to Dewantara (1964), the unity of culture in Indonesia is only a matter of time. Efforts to build unity of culture are needed as every "peak culture" exists in all areas of Indonesia as its substance.

The meaning of cultural education according to Dewantara (1977a) is organizing the growth of best character, among mind, feeling, and will; those three must be educated.

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For mind and intelligence, the value of education is clear—they are the main priority in our education system even now. However, the two that are often forgotten are the education of feeling and will.

3 EDUCATION AND DECENCY

Teaching activity, according to Dewantara (1964), does not generate difficulty, because there are many science books and a teacher usually has their own scientific knowledge. Otherwise, many teachers find it difficult when they try to educate because of lack of preparation and lack of books that can be used as a guide. Therefore, teaching manners and decency needs to be understood by the teachers first (Dewantara, 1951b).

Character teaching is related to the levels of mental development that exist in the lives of children, from childhood to adulthood. Otherwise, according to Dewantara (1977a), the content of teaching is conducted in comparison with the tradition of religious education (Islam), which has long been known by the methods of “*shari’ah*, *hakikat*, *tarikah*, and *ma’rifat*”.

Shari’ah education is used for young children and can be interpreted as habitual behavior and following general rules or habits. In shari’ah phase, children must get used to what is good, so teachers need to constantly reprimand them when they do something wrong, but at the same time always considering the nature of children, which is spontaneous.

The next phase is *hakikat*, which means “reality” or “truth”, and which has the intent of giving understanding to children, so that they become “*insyaf*” and “conscious” about good and the opposite. The teaching of *hakikat* is used for children in the period of *balig* – that is, when the intellect or the power of reasoning develops.

The next phase is *tarikah*, which means “behavior”, which is the act that we intentionally do with the intention of training ourselves to carry out various good, though it is difficult. This phase is an exercise for older children to compel and suppress or rule and control themselves. In religion, the activities of ‘*tarikah*’ are done in the form of fasting, walking to distant places, reducing sleep and eating and suppressing various passions in general (Dewantara, 1951c). This is actually the core content contained in the character education. In the modern educational setting, the exercises are not only related to the intent of *kebatinan* but can also be manifested as art, sport, community and state exercises, starting with the scouting and youth movement, social movements and so on. The activities of these exercises are aimed to train young people to use all their abilities to help the public interest.

The last phase after *tarikah* is the *ma’rifat* method, used in character education for children who have become teenagers. Ma’rifat phase means “understand”. This phase is a good time to inculcate in order for adults not to be hesitant, tossed around by circumstances they have never experienced before. They have to understand the existence of the relationship between the order of birth and inner peace, have enough practice and control of themselves, and put them in the lines of *shari’ah* and *hakikat* phases. They are considered to have understood all desires and possibilities. If they still make a wrong decision, at least they can think responsibly, so they will not be swayed by inner contradictions.

Ma’rifat phase is an education for teenagers whose age is approaching adulthood—those who are 17–20 years old. In this phase, they have entered the phase of “understandability”, are used to do good and realize the means and goals. Character education given in this phase is in the form of science and knowledge which are rather deep and broad; they are introduced to the teaching of “ethics” – the law of decency—which deals also with components such as nationality, humanity, religion, philosophy, science, state, politics in its general nature, culture, customs and others. In that phase, it is also necessary to teach the character of morals listed in the lessons given at certain times and when possible to invite experts in the field to contribute to the teaching (Dewantara 1977b).

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4 METHOD AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURE-BASED CHARACTER EDUCATION

As a stand-alone course, the procedure and method of character education implementation in the History Education Study Program is similar to other courses. The procedures are:

- a. Stipulation of lecture contracts agreed along with the student and then formulated in the course syllabus (attached);
- b. Explanation of the system/method of lecturing to be conducted;
- c. Explanation of tasks that will and should be done by students;
- d. Explanation of the scoring system to be conducted;
- e. Implementation of lectures as planned;
- f. Implementation of evaluation.

The National Character Education course held in the History Education Study Program is developed on the basis of activities. It means that the learning process in order to plant, practice, and habituate these values is conducted through selected and designed activities, in addition to the presentation of concepts via lecture, question and answer, and other learning methods.

The implementation of activity-based National Character Education as stated above is conducted in accordance with the character education concept of Dewantara (1977a) by doing some adjustment and development. The activities include those discussed in the following sections.

4.1 *Stipulation of lecture contract by building hope and commitment*

The aims of this activity are to

- a. Develop the personal responsibility of students to build good habits;
- b. Develop introspective habits in order to make improvements;
- c. Develop the power to control oneself;
- d. Develop social intelligence.

Description of activity:

- i. At the beginning of the meeting, the lecture contracts between lecturers and students are discussed. In the course, the contract is discussed about the applicable provisions and becomes a reference for lectures, such as: the number of days, presence, class entry requirements, clothing, assignment execution, assessments and so forth.
- ii. Although what is discussed is already written in the college's book or academic guidance, the contract is made to build commitment from students, so they are involved and feel that the rules are organized and made together, for the common good.
- iii. In the initial meeting, students are also invited to discuss what characters will be developed during the lecture (one semester), and the desired things toward the class or class characteristics that make them proud to be class citizens (such as ethics/courtesy, environment, discipline, etc.). The characters developed are based on the inherent culture-based values of society. Each student is given an opportunity to submit their proposal. Once collected and directed by the team of lecturers, the characters that will be developed together in the classroom are agreed upon in accordance with the agreed cultural values. At this point, the lecturers and students are committed to work together to implement what has been agreed upon.
- iv. The profile of characterized human, expected class characteristic and mutual commitment are then made in the form of a frame and installed in the classroom as a driver, as well as a reminder of the things that should be achieved by all class members.

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4.2 *Find and determine prioritized words of wisdom obtained from community figures of Yogyakarta and put them in classrooms and strategic places on campus*

The aims of this activity are to

- a. Introduce the students to the local wisdom of Yogyakarta;
- b. Inspire students to develop local wisdom and goodness based on common perceptions;
- c. Recognize the importance of good character;
- d. Develop leadership;
- e. Develop social intelligence.

Description of activity:

- i. Each student is given the task to look for words of wisdom that can inspire and give motivation to anyone who reads them.
- ii. Each student enters and joins into groups of 3–5 people.
- iii. Each group selects a number of words of wisdom that they like best and then compiles a list of these words.
- iv. Each group presents the words of wisdom they have chosen in front of the class and recounts the process they did in discovering and declaring which person said those words of wisdom (emphasized to take local figures of Yogyakarta to bring up the character of local culture).
- v. The group creates a beautiful or interesting format for displaying those words of wisdom and installing them in classrooms and other strategic places.
- vi. Classes compile books of words of wisdom.

4.3 *Students observe and state goodness in the surrounding environment (story telling)*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Increase student awareness of good habits that exist around them;
- b. Grow the desire to develop the observed good habits;
- c. Grow the conviction that they can become a better person;
- d. Train students to be caring and sharing.

Description of activity:

- i. At the beginning of each meeting, several students take turns in storytelling—telling a story of virtue, in which there are life values that can give inspiration to everyone who listens and can motivate them to become a better person.
- ii. The storytelling is followed by a discussion of the virtues contained in the story and of the virtues that can be developed by everyone in everyday life.
- iii. At the end of the storytelling, the lecturer underlines the results of the discussion.

4.4 *Lecturers note goodness in their environment and state it*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Increase attention to virtue;
- b. Inspire students to do good things and become better people;
- c. Increase the willingness of students to care and share.

Description of activity:

- i. Lecturers note good behavior seen in the community or on television, heard on the radio, or read in books or newspapers.
- ii. The lecturer briefly relates these virtues to the students in the class at the beginning of the lesson—either before or after the students' storytelling.

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4.5 *Develop an appreciative atmosphere*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Develop virtue through the power or strength owned by a person or group;
- b. Develop optimism and confidence;
- c. Develop good behavior to become a good habit.

Description of activity:

- i. Lecturers pay attention to good behavior or good things done by the students, no matter how small.
- ii. Lecturers then appreciate the goodness.
- iii. This appreciation can be conveyed by thanking students for the good behavior or kind acts, giving personal praise or mentioning the goodness in front of others, or giving praise in front of others, or mentioning, or giving praise or awards in front of the public.

4.6 *Find idol figures/role models*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Find or identify local figures with good characters who have been meritorious in the progress of society, the progress of the nation, or the progress of the world;
- b. Contemplate the strong character or the kindness that is admired;
- c. Inspire and cultivate motivation to emulate the kindness shown by the admirable figure;
- d. Encourage the students to believe that there is no success without kindness.

Description of activity:

- i. Each student is asked to identify a successful person as their idol.
- ii. Students are asked to highlight the characteristic of the idol that is believed to produce success or asked to write briefly in a few sentences about the privilege of an admired character.
- iii. One by one, the students are asked to publicly declare their chosen character.
- iv. The lecturer compiles all the characteristics mentioned by the students that are believed to be the source of the idol's success.
- v. The lecturer concludes by affirming that the idol's success is due to the good traits (good character) he has.

4.7 *Improve cleanliness and tidiness of the classroom*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Build and strengthen the responsibility of students as good campus residents;
- b. Build a clean-living habit;
- c. Build a habit of living neatly;
- d. Build and strengthen self-discipline.

Description of activity:

- i. Lecturers at the beginning of each lecture always remind students to look around the classroom and observe whether it is clean and neat or not.
- ii. All the class members take the garbage that is still in the classroom and throw it into the trash that is outside the classroom, then tidy up each seat.
- iii. Lecturers give appreciation for the effort and creativity of students in improving the cleanliness and tidiness of the class.
- iv. When the classrooms are clean and tidy, the lectures begin.

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4.8 *Start the lecture by praying*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Establish the habit of being grateful for all the mercy, gifts and grace given by God according to the cultural basis of our religious society;
- b. Encourage all class members to improve good behavior and kind acts;
- c. Increase faith and devotion to God.

Description of activity:

- i. After the classroom has been made clean and tidy and before the lecture begins, the lecturer gives the students the opportunity to offer their own willingness to lead the communal prayer.
- ii. Students who are willing to lead the prayer come to the front of the class then invite everyone to pray.

4.9 *Concerns for problems in society and disaster victims*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Develop and strengthen empathy, sympathy and caring for others, especially for people who are experiencing difficulties or are victims of disaster;
- b. Develop a sense of responsibility, honesty, teamwork and leadership skills;
- c. Develop pride in making a contribution;
- d. Train and develop the ability to manage activities.

Description of activity:

- i. Students are divided into several groups (each group containing up to 5 people) and assigned to undertake a humanitarian project. This project can be any kind of activity, using effective and efficient principles.
- ii. The project is carried out outside the learning activities in the classroom but is still completed in the same semester as the course is delivered.
- iii. The students involved in the activity are asked to be responsible for all activities or donations obtained in writing, neatly and honestly.
- iv. Students are asked to communicate or declare all activities or donations gained, and those distributed or used, in front of the class and to all members of the community.
- v. Lecturers show appreciation for the attempts or efforts that have been made by the students and the results that have been achieved, in a forum that involves the public.

4.10 *Watching films together with a character education theme based on the values of Yogyakarta society local culture, the history of struggle and humanity*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Inspire students or viewers to develop good characters based on Yogyakarta cultural values, such as moral or *unggah-ungguh*, respecting older people, and courtesy;
- b. Develop students' insights into the history of the nation, the culture of the archipelago, the culture of nations, and human civilization;
- c. Develop an appreciation of diversity;
- d. Develop a love for the values of truth and justice, homeland and humanity;
- e. Develop the spirit and sense of togetherness.

Description of activity:

- i. Movies are chosen that inspire or motivate the audience to develop good characters including virtues such as persistence, courage, honesty, caring, affection, justice, and leadership.
- ii. Lecturers and students watch these movies together in the classroom.

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- iii. Lecturers and students conduct a brief discussion of the characters from the characters in the film, or the theme of the movie they watched together.

4.11 *Working in groups*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Develop the habits of sharing, appreciating, mutual support, mutual respect, and leadership potential;
- b. Train students to be responsible.

Description of activity:

- i. Lecturers plan the section of lecture materials that will be taught through the learning process in a team (cooperative learning).
- ii. Groups are formed that will perform specific learning tasks.
- iii. Each group member conveys or recounts the role and contribution to the group results.
- iv. The results are presented to the group.

4.12 *Reflection*

The aims of this activity are to:

- a. Build a habit of introspection or self-examination;
- b. Encourage all class citizens—lecturers and students—to improve their virtues.
- c. Increase honesty to one's self.

Description of activity:

At the end of the course, all members of the class community engage in introspection and write down:

- i. The goodness they have done, to others and for their own good, during the semester.
- ii. Morally questionable things they have done consciously or unconsciously.
- iii. The things they will do in the future to add to their good characters and reduce the development of morally questionable actions.
- iv. Everyone signs their introspection sheet.
- v. Students are asked to give their impressions of character education during the course, the benefits they received and the things that are judged to be lacking, and their suggestions for future improvement of the course.

5 CONCLUSION

Character education in the History Education Study Program, Social Science Faculty, UNY uses a monolithic approach—this means that character education is presented as a stand-alone course and is not integrated into other relevant courses by the name of National Character Education. National Character Education courses are held for second semester students with two credits. Culture-based character education becomes the basis of the implementation of National Character Education courses. Cultural base means culture of society in Yogyakarta.

National Character Education courses held in the History Education Study Program are developed with activity-based means that learning process in order to plant, practice, and habituate these values is conducted through selected and designed activities, in addition to the presentation of concepts via lecture, question and answer, and other learning methods. Lectures are started by (1) stipulation of the lecture contract, building hope and commitment; (2) finding and determining prioritized words of wisdom, which are obtained from community figures of Yogyakarta, and placing them in classrooms and strategic places on campus; (3) students observing and relating examples of goodness in the surrounding environment (storytelling); (4) lecturers noting goodness in their environment and stating it; (5) developing an

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appreciative atmosphere; (6) improving the cleanliness and tidiness of the classroom; (7) starting the lecture by praying; (8) having concern for problems in society and victims of disaster; (9) watching films together with a character education theme based on the values of Yogyakarta society culture, the history of struggle and humanity; (10) reflection—building habits of introspection or self-examination and encouraging all class members to improve virtue and improve honesty to one's self.

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