

Character Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Study on Values, Moral Development, and Student Wellbeing in Remote Learning Environments

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Abstract:

This study aims to determine the importance of character education for Indonesian students during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially those currently undergoing the online learning process. Character education is so important not only on campus, but at home and in the environment. Furthermore, students in higher education are no longer supervised by their parents during the learning process so that character or manners while studying are no longer things that must be considered and are considered important in distance learning. This research is a literature study sourced from library materials using a qualitative approach. The situation becomes different when classroom learning turns into distance learning and students cannot be fully monitored by lecturers and lack of participation from parents who pay less attention to character education at home.

Keywords: character education; student; pandemic

INTRODUCTION

Corona virus is a disease that has started to become epidemic in Indonesia since the end of 2020 until now. The virus that is deadly to millions of human beings has begun to attack the human respiratory system, causing shortness of breath and leading to death. Therefore, governments across the country have adopted social distancing policies to avoid the widespread spread of this virus. The policies and procedures that must be obeyed by all communities during the pandemic are such as wearing masks, washing hands, maintaining distance, and complying with health protocols as set by the government.

One of the new policies that students around the world must comply with today is online learning using virtual media such as Google Classroom, Zoom Meetings, Webex Meetings, and Google Meets. The emergence of online teaching and learning policies in all schools and universities has caused unrest in the community, especially teachers and educators. The concern in question is about the character education of students who are very weak during the implementation of online learning, considering that students, both students and students, have begun to no longer care about etiquette towards teachers such as being polite in front of teachers, listening carefully and not doing other things during learning process takes place.

Character education is the creation of a school environment that helps students in developing ethics, responsibility through models, and teaching good character through universal values. (Bier: 2005). The issue of character education among students is not something new to be brought up again. Long before the pandemic, educators and the general public had also seen for themselves the problems that occurred involving these students such as brawls between schools, drug abuse, sexual violence and cases of spreading pornographic videos. (Benti: 2013).

This phenomenon can be indicated as a form of character education failure. Indeed, education does not only assess students from the cognitive side but also holistically shapes the morals, as well as the character of a student to become an educated individual seen from

knowledge and also attitude or character. Starting earlier this year, the education system that previously studied in the room face-to-face is now carried out remotely through online media, so character education is lost, which could originally be formed in schools and colleges.

Students show what is considered normal during online learning, such as turning off the video when the teacher is teaching, so it is not certain whether they are really listening carefully to what the teacher is saying or maybe they are surfing on other social media. In addition, the etiquette of dressing when in class of course no longer applies when distance learning has started. Students and students no longer pay attention to formal clothes with neatly combed hair, or even pay attention to sitting positions during the learning session. Coupled with many other applications which will then disrupt the concentration of students studying while ignoring learning.

Students and students can access learning media while lying down, sleeping, even while doing other activities, so that their attention is of course disturbed and automatically not fully focused on delivering material from the lecturer. This, of course, is beyond the responsibility and supervision of the lecturer, unlike in the classroom where the lecturer can monitor student behavior in front of his own eyes. As for what is rooted in bad character, it will propagate to the personality of students who will later leave college to enter a more complex world of work and social life.

In fact, such thoughts do not have to appear and propagate in the minds of teachers and the community, because etiquette in studying and character education itself actually needs to be understood and taught from an early age both among students and also for those who already have a student title. Therefore, the government's policy to continue to carry out distance learning online for students and students should not be the cause of the destruction of the value of character education among students so that learning can still be carried out properly and maximally for lecturers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research with a literature study, where the authors collect a number of data, reference books, magazines, and journals related to research problems as the main literature. (Furqan, 1992). Reference sources from the library will then be read and studied by the author in depth in order to obtain an overview of character education in Indonesia, especially during this pandemic.

The in-depth analysis was carried out by the author in examining primary data sources, namely from book sources related to research results and secondary data sources, namely reading and assessing relevant reference books and journals used as library studies in this study. Qualitative studies also require descriptive, analytical, critical and systematic analysis and are relevant to be associated with current phenomena regarding character education during a pandemic, especially in universities. Qualitative research collected from various sources will then be described and classified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept and Meaning of Character Education

Literally, the notion of character is adapted from the English vocabulary "character" which is the nature or character. According to the KBBI, character is defined as character; psychological, moral or character traits that distinguish one person from another. According to Suparman, character education is defined as "the deliberate use of all dimensions of school life to foster optimal character development". This confirms that efforts to develop character

education among students optimally require the support and hard work of all school components, both from the academic aspect, curriculum, quality of learning, handling all subjects, and the ethos of the school environment. (Suparman, 2010).

Another definition says that character education is "the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue that is objectively good human qualities that are good for the individual person and good for the whole society", or (a deliberate effort to realize virtue, namely objectively good human qualities, not only for individuals, but also good for society as a whole). In the world of formal education such as schools, of course, the character of students is formed with pure objectives and qualities so that they can develop not only individually but also be able to socialize well in the community and the wider environment.

Samani and Hariyanto, in a journal written by Wijaya, stated that there are 18 values contained in character education as follows; Religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hard working, independent, creative, democratic, patriotism, curiosity, friendship, love of peace, love to read, preserving the environment, social care, recognizing excellence, respect and responsibility. Of these values, there are four values that synergize with multicultural values, namely tolerance, democracy, mutual respect, and peace. (Wijaya, 2018).

Based on some of the opinions above, character education can essentially be understood as an effort to instill good attitudes and appreciation in the form of noble behavior and wisdom in thinking. Good character, of course, is not only about behavior towards oneself and the environment but also spiritual aspects that need to be considered, namely about the relationship with God. The noble values that form a good character include; honesty, independence, courtesy, social nobility, intelligent thinking and logical thinking. Planting character education cannot just transfer knowledge or train a certain skill. Cultivating character education needs a process, role model, and habituation or cultivation in the environment of students in the school, campus, family, and community environment.

Character Education Goals

Education has a very important meaning where without human education it will be difficult to develop and will likely be left behind. Higher education directs humans to produce quality and competent individuals and maintain noble morals and character. UNESCO itself proclaimed four pillars of national education, namely (1) learning to know (learning to know), (2) learning to do (learning to do something), (3) learning to be (learning to be someone), and (4) learning to live together (learning to live life together).

In line with the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas) formulates the functions and objectives of national education that must be used in developing educational efforts in Indonesia. Article 3 of the National Education System Law states, "National Education functions to develop and shape the character and civilization of the nation that is useful in the context of educating the nation's life, aiming to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe, and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become a democratic and responsible citizen".¹⁴ Thus, the purpose of National Education is a formulation of human quality which then becomes a reference in shaping the character of the nation's children starting from an early age to the level of higher education.

Portraits of Universities in the Time of a Pandemic

Long before the pandemic hit and the online teaching and learning process (KBM) was required, the discourse through seminars on the industrial revolution 4.0 related to higher education was still being discussed. At the end of 2019 when the Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19) outbreak was rife, the theory about the industrial revolution 4.0 with all its disruptions was

tested surprisingly when all universities in Indonesia started to conduct distance learning online using an internet connection. 4.0 seems to give an impression on various aspects of social life considering that not only industrial operations have come to a complete halt and have been forced to lay off workers but also higher education institutions which have been almost entirely closed and replaced through online learning using learning media or e-learning applications.¹⁵

The policy of distance learning (distance learning) raises the pros and cons of various aspects ranging from economic, social, health, and technological aspects from both students and lecturers themselves. As for the complaints that arose starting from the economic fate of lower-middle students who had minimal internet access to study online. As reported by Ishak (2020) that one of the second semester students at the PGSD Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University of Makassar, had a motorcycle accident while looking for an internet network for online lectures. Hasanuddin Makassar. As reported by Djaman (2020), the hospital died after falling from a mosque minaret after trying to find an internet signal to do college assignments online. (Djaman, 2020).

Apart from the two tragedies that claimed lives, this online lecture policy is seen as being able to increase the virtual academic space and the use of digital technology in the industrial era 4.0 which is actually the hope of educational institutions in Indonesia. Since the government temporarily abolished face-to-face learning and replaced it with technology-based learning (IT), many schools and educational institutes including Higher Education in Indonesia, which were originally still fully implementing conventional or face-to-face learning, have now started to encourage lecturers and students to familiarize themselves with the use of technology. education-based digital (e-education) that has been used globally.

Character Education Challenges during the Covid-19 Pandemic

New situations that arise in the midst of habits in carrying out their duties as teachers and students actually cause panic and unpreparedness to face the "new normal" in higher education institutions, namely online and distance learning. The limited network access in some areas as well as the limited situation and distance to meet face-to-face with lecturers raises several new problems among students or students from aspects of the character and culture of lectures which also become complaints from lecturers, such as exposure to interviews with one of the lecturers. at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, "during online lectures, many students turn off videos during lectures, so we don't know whether they are listening to the material or not. It is possible for students to even access social media and play online games."

If viewed further, the cultural aspect from the student's point of view seems complex if reality shows how faded the problem-solving mentality in students who had been fooled through petitions for the abolition of scientific papers for final students (thesis) and the waiver of tuition fees during the pandemic that had been proposed. at the beginning of the implementation of online lectures by most students in universities. This phenomenon shows how low the thinking quality of students who do not have good problem solving maturity is. In fact, if analyzed, the final project can be completed by replacing the field study or experiment method, with library research and distributing research questionnaires through online applications for each field of study.²⁰

The Covid-19 pandemic, in general, is a challenge for educational institutions in Indonesia as well as a correction to the big ideas of the technology system launched by higher education institutions such as the mission model of online learning with distance learning. The facts show that the digital-based online learning system that is relied on during the pandemic cannot fully be used and utilized by all campus residents. Looking at the pros and cons that occur in the field, some lecturers still doubt the behavior of students when online learning takes place.

This is the fruit of a separate issue about what kind of character is expected of students during online lectures so that the attitude that should be responded to by students when the emergence of new policies by the government which is then felt to be a bit pressurizing students so that students should still act naturally and rationally in taking attitudes and not even on the contrary.

CONCLUSION

Character education is a system of naming character values which includes components of attitudes, actions and moral values in individuals both towards God Almighty, fellow environment, towards the nation and of course to oneself. The development of the character of the nation's children can be taught from an early age at school or at home, but considering that students spend more time in school, the role of teachers and educators becomes crucial in shaping the character of the nation's children.

The portrait of universities during the pandemic is a benchmark for the success or failure of the 4.0 revolution discourse regarding the world of digital technology-based education as well as answering the consequences that will occur if the push for technological progress is absorbed in all aspects of higher education in Indonesia, which is now suddenly forced to be enforced without warning. the occurrence of large-scale changes in the world of Indonesian education that have an impact on all educational institutions, including higher education institutions.

The challenge of character education in universities in this pandemic is a reflection on the possibilities that will occur after the pandemic, especially in universities in Indonesia and the best steps that can be taken to prevent negative consequences as well as positive anticipation towards better student character education to meet the challenges of the upcoming globalization era.

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