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THE IMPACT OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOLERANCE CHARACTER OF ELEMENTARY AGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Background: Various studies on multicultural education have been examined by previous researchers, but the focus on efforts to foster intercultural awareness and tolerance attitudes has not been responded to in a complex manner. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine how intercultural awareness education develops student character. **Method:** This research combines a literature review methodology with a qualitative approach. **Result:** The research findings found that fostering one's character requires consistent work and deep contemplation to arrive at a number of moral judgments that must then be practiced for them to become wise and practical. To form all this into a habit and shape one's character or behavior, it takes time. The family and home, the school environment, and the community must all be involved in the education process. Rebuilding the almost destroyed educational network and the relationship between the three educational contexts is the main step to take. As long as the three educational environments are not harmonious and sustainable, it will never be possible for educational traits and characters to be successfully formed. **Conclusion:** The research concluded that tolerance character building through multicultural education is important to be given to children from elementary age, where the practice reflects the synergy between family, school and society, thus helping students become citizens who are tolerant of others.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Multicultural education is a priority aspect of learning in every educational unit, including for elementary school age. This is based on the wealth of a nation, one of which is the plurality of society (Miled, 2019; Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver, 2019). Ideally, from an early age, every child is introduced to culture, with the aim of loving their own culture and recognizing other cultures, as an asset to create social harmony (Arfa & Lasaiba, 2022; Barton & Ho, 2020). Furthermore, the introduction of culture is the main capital in fostering awareness and intercultural tolerance for students from an early age (Tualalelei & Halse, 2021; Khotimah & Januarizal, 2017).

Likewise, the reality on the ground shows that bullying still occurs among students, as evidence that the teaching of intercultural awareness or multicultural education has not been fully internalized in children since elementary age (Nielsen & Ma, 2021; Yusuf, 2018). In fact, we all realize that the life of the state and nation depends on education. A country can achieve its goals through education. Given the range and diversity of its geographical features and socio-cultural context, Indonesia is one of the most cosmopolitan countries in the world (Priyatna, 2017; Ansori, 2018). In terms of values, culture and ethnicity, Indonesia is a very diverse nation. Eko & Putranto (2021) state that Indonesia has a diversity of languages, social aspirations, cultures, religions, politics and economic capabilities.

Various aspects of Indonesian human nature continue to be closely examined by various groups. People from Indonesia have openly displayed various vices under seemingly appropriate pretexts. There are so many contemporary problems that we are witnessing, and they never seem to end. Examples include increasing drug use despite the fact that many perpetrators have received the death penalty, violent robberies involving bullying in schools, sexual offenses against students, and online student sex transactions.

Besides helping the country become more technologically and informationally advanced, education plays an important role in fostering a morally upright society as well as improving national intelligence. However, that does not imply that doing both is simple. Making our country smart and intelligent may be simple, but we also feel that creating a decent and moral society based on religion is a challenge (Lestari, 2016; Zainiyati, 2007; Junaidi, 2018). As a result, moral issues can be classified as persistent problems that affect individuals across Indonesia. Thus, it is accurate to argue that religion without science is blind and science without religion is lame, as the sages say.

In general, character is often associated with the temperament that gives it, as if the definition places special emphasis on the psychosocial components of upbringing and environment (Johnson & Caraballo, 2019; Munadlir, 2016). The system of teaching character values to students that combines information, awareness or willingness, and action for these values is known as character education (Supriatin & Nasution, 2017; Salchak, *et.al.*, 2024).

In essence, the purpose of character education is to mold students into moral beings who can value their autonomy and accountability in their interactions with each other and the outside world. Character education thus always aims to create moral people who are able to make moral decisions that show up in their behavior and who can actively participate in creating a community of goodwill (Degaga & Mekuria, 2023; Kemal, *et.al.*, 2019; Alzanaa & Harmawati, 2021).

It is clear from the previous explanation that character education is highly valued in the country's education system. This is a result of the moral decay that has taken place in society since the country's forefathers went to school. It started with elements of criminal activities, verbal abuse, fighting, bullying, and immoral behavior. As such, scholars wanted to look at character development from a different angle, that of educating children about multicultural ideas and how to react morally and wisely to diversity. The theme provides a summary of this research project, "*The Impact of Multicultural Education on Student Character Development*".

B. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. The study used to write this essay is known as library research, and is based on observations made in authentic environmental and social reality settings. Therefore, this research needs to use reliable and relevant sources through the use of online resources such as online books and online compilations of papers published in approved journals whose legitimacy is recognized (Assingkily, 2021). The data sources of this research include primary references in the form of relevant scientific articles and secondary references in the form of books and scientific proceedings. This research analyzes the data sources by triangulation. Furthermore, this research uses information consistent with credible websites (recognized as legitimate and authoritative); statistical libraries and other relevant organizations, for example, provide data such as SINTA, DOAJ, *Google Scholar*, and Science Direct.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Importance of Character Development in the Implementation of Multicultural Education Models

Character education seeks to foster the values that make up Pancasila, the values that make up the character of the nation. These values include: (1) fostering in students the potential to become human beings with good hearts, good minds, and good behavior; (2) creating a nation with Pancasila character; and (3) fostering the potential of citizens to be confident, proud of their country, and love humanity.

Munif (2018) came to the conclusion that the purpose of character education is to help children form, instill, facilitate, and develop positive values so that they can grow into excellent and dignified people. In addition, character education is needed for seven main reasons, according to Shofa (2016): (1) to guarantee that the child (student) has a positive personality in his/her life; (2) to improve academic achievement; (3) some students cannot develop strong character for themselves in other contexts; (4) it is the best way to prepare students for workplace behavior. Teaching cultural values is part of civilization. It equips students to live in a diverse society and respect others. (5) Addressing social-moral problems, rudeness, dishonesty, violence, sexual activity offenses, and low work (study) ethics from the bottom up.

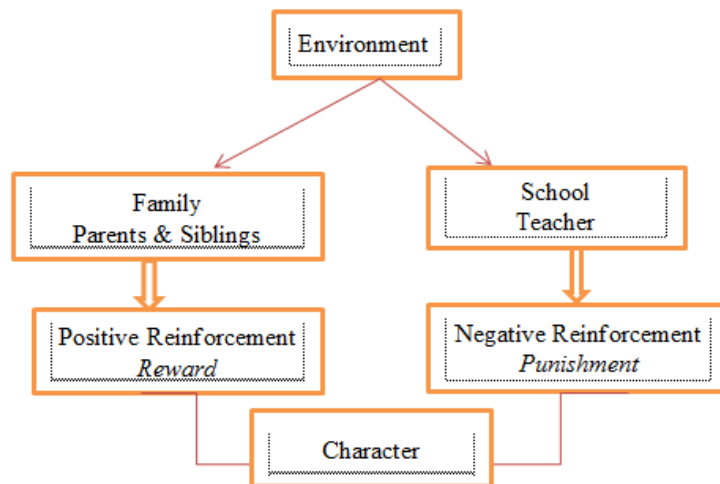
Nurchayono (2018) highlights the importance of character education by outlining nine pillars of noble morals that must be embedded in students, including: Love of God and truth; Independence, responsibility, and self-control; Trustworthiness; Politeness and respect; Love, care, and collaboration; Confident, inventive, and never give up; Justice and spirit of leadership; Humble and kind; and Tolerance and love of peace.

It is now important for educators to implement character through education to produce high-quality human resources. As a result, it is important to integrate the positive values of character education into the education process in schools, families and society in general. In addition, the multicultural education model for schools can be practiced by incorporating it into the curriculum at the education unit level.

Human Character: True vs. False

The purpose of character education is to better understand ethical ideals through various approaches and instill them in people so that they can continue to contribute positively to society. Character education is applied in the field or in schools by using psychological totality, which includes all the potential of each individual human being (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) as well as the role of socio-cultural totality in the context of interaction in the family, educational environment, and society (Ningsih, *et.al.*, 2022; Sabzalian, 2019).

From the perspective of behaviorism, an individual's environment has a significant influence in affecting their behavior, which in turn shapes their character. The environment affects people by influencing and managing their behavior. Here, settings are defined as parents and teachers (Wang & Gao, 2023; Ambarudin, 2016; Tanggaard, 2020).



Scheme 1. Character Education Based on Family, School and Community

From here, a teacher plays an important role in controlling the environment by providing reinforcement in the form of incentives or rewards. Instructors provide appropriate reinforcement as much as possible to let their students' personalities show. In order to maximize students' character education, parents can also play a role in the character building process at school by monitoring and evaluating the behavior shown by their children at home or by providing additional reinforcement in the form of character role models.

Multifaceted Crisis and Ethical Decline: The Importance of Character Education

Character education is important because it maximizes the content of good and positive character (behavior, attitudes, and traits of noble character, noble morals), which serves as a strong foundation and a strong guide for the development of individuals and countries in the future. According to Nanggala (2020), character

education is an important and calculated step in rebuilding Indonesia's identity and encouraging the development of a new Indonesian society. To do this, character education needs to involve all relevant stakeholders, including families, schools and the larger school environment (community). Therefore, rebuilding the almost broken educational networks and relationships between these three educational contexts is the first step that needs to be taken. As long as there is a lack of coherence and harmony across the three educational contexts, character development and character education will fail.

First and foremost, families must be given more authority once again to function as places of character development and education. Families must return to their original role as learning centers filled with genuine love and affection, schools of love, or schools of compassion. Since the family is the foundation of the nation, the state of the family affects the nation as a whole (Sanur & Dermawan, 2023; Puspita, 2018; Zamathoriq & Subur, 2018).

Meanwhile, character education in schools entails more than just the acquisition of knowledge-it involves the development of moral principles, ethical standards, artistic merit, and noble character. By rewarding (praising) those who succeed and punishing those who fail, one can promote (sneer at) excellent values while discouraging (discouraging) the implementation of poor values. Furthermore, implementing character-based education (also known as character-based learning) in all current subjects as well as certain subjects that focus on teaching character, such as history, religion, Pancasila morality, and the indigenous culture of the Indonesian people (Rosyada, 2014; Nugraha, 2020).

However, education is still important in today's world because a person's character and temperament are significantly influenced by their community. The successful establishment of moral and aesthetic values for character building is significantly influenced by the larger communal environment. The attitudes and viewpoints of the community as a whole are influenced by the social context and the values it upholds. It is clear that the larger community context has a significant impact on how well aesthetic and moral principles are embedded in character development (Aeni & Astuti, 2020).

Their adherence to the value system shapes people's attitudes and viewpoints. Their efforts and aspirations are also limited to the "here and now" if their viewpoints and value systems are focused on the "here and now". Moreover, maintaining moral principles and preventing immoral behavior is a shared responsibility of the societal context.

Children have the capacity and means to participate in the educational process in schools if they are the future of the country and if they are raised in a decent home with the four qualities mentioned above. Again, as many people have said many times, schools should be places where students can receive education, including education on values and character.

In essence, education is more than just "knowledge transfer" at school. It is more than just a location where instructors impart knowledge on various subjects (Khairuddin, 2018). Schools are organizations that work towards value-oriented learning and business procedures. Moreover, since schools are a conscious effort by human society to manage its growth patterns, it is believed that the organization of the school system is itself a moral enterprise.

Alternative Techniques for Developing Character in Schools

The character education approach consists of programming and plans developed based on character ideals and implemented daily through hands-on activities (Mumtahanah, 2020). The right approach must be chosen by parents and educators for character education in children to be successful. Internalizing character values through learning activities, extracurricular activities and habituation activities is how character education is practiced.

Character education can be implemented through learning activities in seven ways. The first is to ensure that the objectives are specific and measurable. Next, character education will be more successful and efficient if implemented together with parents and schools. Third, educate all educators about their critical roles and duties in implementing and achieving character education goals for students. Fourth, educators must understand the importance of the hidden curriculum and how it can help shape students' moral development.

Fifth, educators should highlight students' capacity for teamwork, critical and creative thinking, and decision-making when practicing learning. Sixth, student character development needs to utilize the school culture. Seventh, parents also supervise and manage their children's behavior every day in the family and community (Riyanti & Novitasari, 2021; Khotimah & Januarizal, 2017).

To help children develop their character, teachers can use various techniques, such as: First of all, professionals in the school can engage in role modeling or modeling. This includes the principal, senior staff, non-teaching educators, and teachers. This is an attempt to model behavior for children, if not behavior, at least in part. Religious belief, honesty, perseverance, discipline, and compassion are examples of character traits that can be achieved by modeling or leading by example. Second, impromptu pursuits. This task is usually assigned when an instructor observes a student engaging in a bad attitude or behavior, such as yelling to get what they want.

Third, chastisement: To assist students in changing their behavior, teachers should chastise misbehaving students and encourage them to uphold moral principles. Environmental conditioning is the fourth. The physical facilities provided affect the school atmosphere in this way. Providing cleaning supplies and trash cans, for example, can help people understand the need to read, and rules and slogans can help people understand the importance of discipline.

Fifth, daily tasks Students engage in routine tasks regularly and consistently. Completing and handing in homework on time are examples of routine activities that can enhance children's character values. Children can learn the values of discipline and responsibility through these exercises, which will help them get used to being disciplined and responsible in all that they do (Ambarwangi & Soeharto, 2013; Tualaulelei & Halse, 2021).

National character education needs to be restructured urgently. This is the result of some of the multifaceted challenges facing Indonesian society today. In addition to being caused by unstable national, state, and social infrastructures, multifaceted crises are also the result of the dynamics of how the global order is changing as a result of the rapid flow of information, capital, goods, services, people, and culture across national borders. As a result of the multifaceted crises caused by modernization, industrialization, globalization, regional autonomy, environmental degradation, moral

and intellectual degradation, and potential inter-group conflicts (racial, ethnic, and religious), national character education must be reorganized.

Optimizing good and positive character content-that is, noble moral qualities, attitudes, and behaviors-is crucial to character education as it serves as a solid foundation and a strong compass for the future growth of individuals and countries. Character education and development is a multifaceted process that begins at home, at school, and in daily social interactions; as such, they require more than the acquisition of knowledge-embedding or teaching values is equally important.

D. CONCLUSION

From the previous description, it can be concluded that multicultural education is the main capital for educators in preparing superior generations (students) based on intercultural awareness. As for teaching through the habit method and shaping one's character or behavior, it takes time. Families and homes, school environments, and communities must all be involved in the education process. In this context, primary-age children need the synergy of the trilogy of educational environments to foster awareness of the plurality of society and the importance of multicultural-based harmony.

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