The Effectiveness of Character Education through the Multicultural Approach in the Civic Education Subject

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan efektivitas pendidikan karakter melalui pendekatan multikultural dalam mata pelajaran PKn pada siswa kelas V SD. Pendidikan karakter tidak diajarkan dalam mata pelajaran tertentu. Namun, itu dimasukkan ke dalam semua mata pelajaran sekolah dasar. Salah satunya adalah mata pelajaran Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan (PKn). Pendidikan karakter dilaksanakan untuk menghasilkan generasi penerus bangsa yang dapat berperilaku sesuai dengan falsafah Pancasila dan UUD 1945. Oleh karena itu, pendidikan karakter ini diajarkan mulai dari usia dini, yaitu pada jenjang sekolah dasar. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti melakukan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Selain itu, pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Data yang terkumpul kemudian dianalisis menggunakan reduksi data, penyajian, dan inferensi. Selanjutnya, dalam memvalidasi data yang terkumpul, peneliti menggunakan triangulasi metode dan waktu.
Kata kunci: *Karakter, Sekolah Dasar, Anak Usia Dini.*

Abstract

This study aims to explain the effectiveness of character education through the multicultural approach in the civic education subject in 5th-grade elementary school students. Character education is not taught in a specific subject. However, it is incorporated into all elementary school subjects. One of them is the civic education subject (Indonesian: *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan* (PKn)). Character education is implemented to produce the future generation that may behave according to the philosophies of Indonesia's Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Therefore, this character education is taught starting from an early age, namely at the elementary school level. In this study, the researchers carried out a qualitative approach with a case-study method. Moreover, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The collected data were then analyzed using data reduction, presentation, and inference. Furthermore, in validating the collected data, the researchers employed method and time triangulations.
Keywords: *Character, Elementary School, Early Childhood*

INTRODUCTION

In the world, Indonesia is the largest multicultural country (Larisu & Mona, 2022) consisting of various ethnic groups, religions, races, and islands spread from Sabang to Merauke (Ferdian Noor & Sugito, 2019). For this reason, every Indonesian citizen must have a sense of unity and oneness that is embedded within them. If they are not united, Indonesia's ideals will only become a dream that will never come true. Therefore, Indonesian citizens must be able to live up to the motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*", which means unity in diversity.

Besides having positive influences, this diversity condition has negative impacts on the Indonesian people (Nakaya, 2018), such as the occurrence of several conflicts like bullying, sexual harassment, murder, poverty, violence, and loss of humanity. In social life, we may encounter accidental problems (Parihala, Samson, & Tika

Lestari, 2019). For example, a person or group of people who do not understand diversity will have thoughts and behavior that do not reflect the diversity within them (Žalec & Pavlíková, 2019). It can be seen in the condition that today's young generation has a declining national spirit in terms of the perspective, thoughts, mentality, behavior, and clothes that no longer reflect the true Indonesian people (Fitriatun, Nopita, & Muliyani, 2018).

From those various problems, education can play a role in changing individualist behavior to diverse behavior so that the young generation can respond to differences in religion, culture, ethnicity, and race wisely. In addition, through education, they are expected to be able to overcome other problems in social life (Apascaritei & Elvira, 2021). Successful education can create a future generation that has better quality than the current generation. For this reason, education has a highly important duty in educating the nation's children and shaping their character in which they are expected to have morals in line with the cultural values of the Republic of Indonesia. Character is defined as the behavior and morality that is within each individual. It is located at the deepest part of the human conscience. Currently, many schools have applied character education. This character education is very significant for students because it can inhibit the negative influence of various mass media and the surrounding environment (Muthohar, 2021).

Character education is not a recent invention. It is a part of the school's goals. Schools provide character education along with intellectual, moral, and literacy education (Izzati *et al*., 2019). In educational institutions, students must be able to develop an attitude of respect, obedience, and cooperation between fellow believers and adherents of different beliefs through education in general, especially through civic education subject. Because elementary schools have no subjects specializing in teaching character education, the civic education subject is considered to have similar points due to teaching character values in schools (Dewi, Sauri, & Kosasih, 2021).

Therefore, researchers have an interest in examining a phenomenon that seeks not to make someone caring and tolerant. The attitude of tolerance is very important for all people to have and needs to be developed from an early age through education by presenting a multicultural approach in schools through the civic education subject. With the presence of the civic education subject, students are expected to have the awareness, willingness to behave, togetherness, and tolerance to fellow Indonesians in their daily lives in line with the philosophy of Pancasila. Efforts to support tolerance must be carried out at the basic education level because tolerance can be a foundation for the younger generation to live side by side in a multicultural society. In addition, multicultural awareness is expected to be able to reduce conflicts that may destroy the nation. Likewise, the presence of the civic education subject in schools is expected that the national character that should be had by students can be established from an early age.

METHODS

In this study, the researchers employed a qualitative approach. In this type of research, the collected data are in the form of words or statements, gathered through interviews, observation, and documentation, aiming at understanding and explaining phenomena/events by finding meaning behind the investigated phenomena/events (Retnasari, Setyaningrum, & Prasetyo, 2022). Moreover, the researchers applied Miles & Huberman's analysis technique by following several stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and then conclusions which contain answers to the formulated problems set at the beginning of the research (Syahputra, Harahap, & Safitri, 2022). To validate the obtained data in qualitative research, the researchers used 2 triangulations: methods and time. Method triangulation was carried out by comparing information or data in different ways (Noble & Heale, 2019). Meanwhile, time triangulation was conducted by comparing information or data from the different times of collection, in which time was determined based on the agreement between researchers and participants (Vik, Nilsen, & Øverby, 2022). Thus, the position of the researchers was limited to data collectors and information seekers only. In other words, the data and information obtained were purely based on interviews with subjects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis indicate that the elementary schools which became the location of data collection had implemented character education for their students. Character education is not taught in a special subject. However, its implementation is incorporated in all subjects with various discussions and contexts.

The values in character education activities that are developed in all subjects are adjusted to the goals of National Education. Those values are (1) religiosity, (2) nationalism, (3) independence, (4) cooperation, and (5) integrity. This must be reflected in the words, actions, and attitudes of students. Good deeds (actions) can be observed in students' attitudes to their friends, teachers, and the environment. In addition, the value of honesty is highly emphasized in this part. It is instilled in stories given to the students. Its development is related to the daily life of children, while its implementation is carried out during learning activities.

Character is a distinctive trait possessed by each person. Every child has their respective characteristics, which are still within the scope of the child's world. In this case, things included in the world of children are the conditions in which children play as usual but must be under parental supervision. For example, children are obedient and respectful to teachers and parents, cooperate with peers, respect each other, and are responsible for what has been done and what has been given.

For the civic education subject, teachers do not need to apply specific treatments in teaching the learning material. The teachers only need to follow what is already set in the lesson plan. These lesson plans may also be changed, revised, or followed completely or partially. In addition to the civic education subject, the elementary schools have special subjects about getting to know Indonesian cultures, namely ethnic diversity subjects which are usually incorporated into the social science subject. Teachers of this subject teach students about ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. This subject introduces students to Indonesia's traditional clothes, weapons, houses, musical instruments, food, songs, customs, and dances through pictures or videos. In addition, before starting the learning activities, students in this subject are required to sing the national anthem (Indonesia: *Indonesia Raya*; English: Great Indonesia) or to read Pancasila – the 5 pillars of Indonesia. This is implemented to increase students' sense of nationalism and to make them proud of being Indonesian people.

The multicultural approach in general teaches about tolerance or mutual respect for differences because students in the school do not come from one or two religions or ethnicities only. The implementation of this approach begins with introducing some religions and ethnicities in Indonesia and then teaching mutual respect for opinions and respecting differences. For example, during the Islamic religious subject, non-Muslim students can be given the freedom to choose to remain in or leave the classroom. In addition, non-Islamic subjects are held jointly by neighboring schools in predetermined schedules. This policy is taken because non-Muslim students are sometimes not many in one school. For this reason, its implementation is carried out in collaboration with surrounding schools. Moreover, during the event of the Maulid of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, non-Muslims are still allowed to follow but in detail and still respect each other. Concerning the religions, students in the schools that became research locations follow Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism. Furthermore, concerning ethnicity, they mostly come from the Betawi, Batak, Sundanese, and Javanese tribes. However, in the classroom, these differences are not visible and all students make friends without discriminating against each other.

In character education, there is no special training within the classroom. Training is applied outside the classroom, namely in extracurricular activities. For example, scouts and pencak silat extracurriculars teach about discipline, self-confidence, hardworking, responsibility, and others. Some of the extracurricular activities at the schools that became the research locations are scouts, pencak silat, marawis, and dancing.

School activities, before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, went well. For instance, on Monday, the ceremony was held. On Tuesday, the school conducted an exercise together. Wednesday was filled with the scout extracurricular activity which was mandatory for all students. On Friday, there were religious activities and clean Fridays (cleaning the school areas together). On Saturday, students followed extracurricular activities consisting of many fields which they chose freely. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, schools implemented health protocols by maintaining distance, not crowding, and stopping all

activities at school. All activities that were originally routinely carried out were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, in the era of post-COVID-19, the schools made some modifications. For example, on Monday, the flag ceremony is only attended by teachers in the field and all students follow it from their respective classrooms accompanied by their homeroom teacher. In addition, religious activities are carried out in each respective classroom. In this case, Muslim students only recite Juz 'Amma and Surah Yasin.

For schools, the goals addressing the expected student character are achieved if the student can be responsible, has good manners, is disciplined, can be independent, may work together, and is creative according to freedom of expression. Students not only have to be good at science but also have to be good at ethics, attitude, character, and morals. Therefore, the success of students is determined not only by learning outcomes but also by changes in attitudes to a better direction. In other words, teachers are required not only to teach students about science but also to change children's behavior from bad to good in line with the philosophy of Pancasila.

Character is a behavior that is inherent in a person. Everyone has a distinctive character. A character has the same meaning as personality which is considered a characteristic, style, trait, or attribute possessed by every person. It is shaped by what is given by the surrounding environment, such as family during childhood. Furthermore, it can also be innate. Character comes from the Greek, namely "to mark" which means marking and focusing on the application of the value of goodness in the form of action (Srirahmawati & Hunaifi, 2022) so that people who are dishonest, cruel, or greedy will be considered to be people with bad character. Conversely, people whose behavior is in line with moral rules are called people with noble character.

The character can be used in identifying a person (Sari & Bermuli, 2021). People with good character are those who respond to all situations morally in the form of concrete actions and good behavior. Thus, a character is an innate trait from within one's heart and soul. In addition, it is a marker of one's distinctive personality (Putra, 2019). Those having good character know what is best and do what is best (Jahan *et al.*, 2021).

The effectiveness can only be obtained after analyzing the implementation of activities in this case the teaching and learning process (Saputro *et al.*, 2021). The word "effective" means the occurrence of effects or consequences that occur in an action. In other words, the more successful the plans for an activity are, the more considered effective and efficient they will be. Effectiveness is always associated with the expected results in line with the achieved actual results. Therefore, effectiveness can be interpreted as a measurement in which a target has been achieved following what has been planned.

Effective character education is highly important, especially in the educational system in Indonesia. Character education can be defined as all efforts to influence the character of students to be religious, nationalist, productive, and creative (Singh, 2019). The values in character education developed based on the KTSP curriculum are (1) religiosity, (2) honesty, (3) tolerance, (4) discipline, (5) hardworking, (6) creativity, (7) independence, (8) democratic attitude, (9) curiosity, (10) nationalism, (11) love for the homeland, (12) appreciating achievements, (13) being friendly/communicative, (14) love peace, (15) love to read, (16) care for the environment, (17) care for the society, and (18) being responsible.

Character education is not only teaching to distinguish the right and wrong behaviors but also attempting to instill good habits so that students can behave and act based on the good values that have become their personalities (Astuti, Waluyo, & Rohmadi, 2019). The lesson materials in character education must be taught directly (by examples) so that students can see and practice them at the same time (Pradana *et al.*, 2021). Character education is highly focused on the learning process in schools to produce students who have good character. Character education is not taught in a special subject. However, its implementation is integrated into all subjects. The point is that the character values to be instilled can be reached and understood by students. In addition, these values are expected to become permanent behavior of all students (Jeynes, 2019).

Character education aims to improve the quality of educational processes and outcomes that may lead to the complete, integrated, balanced, and noble character in line with determined graduate competency standards in each educational unit and following the philosophy of Pancasila (Syuraini & Zukdi, 2020). Therefore, character education is much more complex than teaching other subjects. This is reinforced by the presence of three main elements in character building, namely knowing the good, loving the good, and doing

the good. In other words, character education is an effort to guide human behavior towards good qualities.

A multicultural condition contains a variety of cultures that must be respected and upheld. Indonesia is the largest multicultural country that adheres to the concept of "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (English: Diversity in Unity) (Widayati & Maulidiyah, 2018). Therefore, tolerance or mutual respect for various kinds of differences is highly needed to be possessed by all Indonesian people. In Indonesia, each region has unique and distinctive characteristics. This fact should make all Indonesian people proud by preserving this uniqueness and showing openness attitude, mutual recognition, respect, and harmony.

Multicultural education in Indonesia is more appropriate to be considered as an approach, namely an educational approach that strives for cultural, ethnic, and religious values in Indonesia to be understood, appreciated, and utilized under the motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" and the philosophy of Pancasila by promoting tolerance and harmony between cultures and between religious adherents. An approach is similar to a strategy. The application of this approach is one of the efforts that can improve the quality of education, especially in balancing curriculum development in the learning process carried out in each school. By applying the approach, all students are expected to become more active and participate directly in the learning process.

If the peace has been established by instilling these intended values within students, this condition will make students easier to work together to achieve goals in their educational journey. The multicultural approach in the civic education subject is highly needed to be implemented so that students can have complex values to be applied in everyday life. In addition, by utilizing these values maximally, students are expected to be good, intelligent, skilled, and quality Indonesian citizens as mandated by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (Anjar *et al.*, 2020). The relationship between the multicultural approach in the civic education subject and character development fills in the dimensions that cannot be separated from public morality (Waluyandi, Trihastuti, & Muchtarom, 2020).

The civic education subject undoubtedly needs to be taught to students so that they can have useful capital to be applied in everyday life, which may make them Indonesian people according to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (Ainsyiyah & M. Ginting, 2020). The future generations will determine the future direction of a nation. If they do not show any change heading in a better direction, it can be ascertained that the future of the nation will experience chaos (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2018). The civic education subject (Indonesian: *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan* (PKn)) is a subject taught in elementary schools, which teaches students basic knowledge and abilities related to character building by developing spiritual, social, knowledge, and skill competencies, and shaping students to become pious citizens to God Almighty while upholding the unity of the Republic of Indonesia as mandated by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (Camellia, Kurnisar, & Nurdiansyah, 2021).

The civic education subject does not focus on only theories but also on improving the morale of students to shape them to be good citizens (Rachmadtullah *et al.*, 2018). Students' awareness of changes first appears not through theories or concepts but concrete experiences (Wagiono, Shaddiq, & Junaidi, 2021). The lesson materials in the civic education subject also provide knowledge of politics and laws applicable in society (Nali Puji Brata *et al.*, 2020).

With the application of a multicultural approach in the civic education subject, students are prepared to face various problems and conflicts related to the diversity of culture, ethnicity, and religion encountered in their everyday life by solving problems, developing positive-active ways of thinking, and acquiring adequate skills. Carrying out this approach as planned can be an effort to make students grow and develop into more humane individuals. They may also have full awareness of their responsibility for their lives, thereby having no intention to harm others. The multicultural approach is based on the reality and local wisdom applied in Indonesia by taking into account the characteristics of the Indonesian nation's life and culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the elaboration in previous sections, we can draw two brief conclusions. First, a character is a distinctive trait possessed by each individual, which is obtained innately, passed down by parents, or influenced by the surrounding environment. This character can sometimes make surrounding people happy. However, it occasionally can also cause trouble. In line with that, elementary school students must recognize, realize, and internalize the values of character or behavior that they can use in their everyday life. All of them can only be

gained through the educational process. Education offered by schools is an effort to help develop students' future. By going through education, they may have good character and distinguish what is right and what is wrong. Second, character education in elementary schools has been implemented well and is running smoothly. The values that are deduced are those that are expected to be useful in students' everyday life, such as discipline, cooperation, solidarity, tolerance, caring, togetherness, courage, responsibility, entrepreneurship, creativity, independence, honesty, and social skills. The results of this study provide an overview to teachers and other researchers about the condition in which teachers must be more creative in designing and developing learning tools to be able to improve student's critical thinking skills in character assessment. In addition, teachers must involve students in learning situations that can stimulate students' ability to think critically through various active learning models. Furthermore, this study is expected to be a reference for readers who are interested to research the topic of instilling characters in elementary school students through a multicultural approach to the civic education subject.

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