

National Character Development And Character Education In Schools Malaysia

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Abstract – Character building in schools in Malaysia has been carried out since the British colonial period. The rapid economic growth in Malaysia has brought about changes in the structure of society and its behavior, which has resulted in character education becoming a mandatory lesson to anticipate social change and the implementation of character education in schools for students. Starting in the 1980s, sixteen pure values were introduced, understood by students, and became the main theme for teachers, which is applied in various lessons and aspects of life. Education must be based on core values rooted in social life. Basic education has implemented character education both in curriculum and educational practice. Educational institutions responsible for developing and implementing education of national character in order to promote national civilization. The purpose of this research is to analyze the development of character education in the school curriculum in Malaysia. This type of research is qualitative research using the descriptive analysis method of literature study.

Keywords – Character building, Character education, Malaysian Education, National Character

I. INTRODUCTION

National character education has become a central issue that is often discussed in the world of education. Governments of various countries have made character education a priority because character is one of the most important pillars in the life of the nation and state (Hidayati, et al., 2014: 189). Character education is a system for developing student character values that include components of knowledge, awareness, or will and actions that will be applied to religion, self, society, environment and nation as complete human beings (Agung, 2011: 395).

According to Lickona (in Febrianshari, 2018: 89), character education is an effort that is deliberately designed to improve student character. One of the goals of character education is to develop habits and behaviors in students that are commendable and in harmony with universal values, religious traditions, and national cultural traditions. Education in Malaysia is the responsibility of the federal government. The national education system covers education from preschool to university. Pre-tertiary education (from pre-school to secondary education) is the responsibility of the Malaysian Ministry of Education, while tertiary education is the responsibility of the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education.

The types and levels of education in Malaysia can be grouped as follows: preschool education, primary and secondary education, secondary education, tertiary education, and private education. The National Curriculum is an educational program that includes curriculum and activities that include knowledge, skills, norms, values, elements of culture and beliefs. The aim is to help the development of students as a whole and optimally in terms of physical, spiritual, mental and emotional development, as well as instill and increase the desired moral values.

The Malaysian Ministry of Education explained in a paper entitled Analysis of the State Curriculum Malaysia divided the national curriculum into early childhood care and education curriculum, national pre-school standard curriculum, low school

integrated curriculum, low school standard curriculum, and secondary school integrated curriculum. Since 1983, the government has decided to apply moral education to non-Muslim students, which is mandatory and tested in the final exam. Moral education is given to non-Muslim students when Muslim students study Islamic religion. Nik Pa (in Nik Pa and Idris, 2008: 293) says that for students who are Muslim, value and moral education are taught directly through Islamic religious education subjects, while for students who are not Muslim, value and moral education are taught directly through educational subjects. moral. Initially, moral education was only given at the elementary school level.

In its development, moral education was implemented in secondary schools with the implementation of the Middle School Integrated Curriculum. Malaysia is a country in Southeast Asia that has experienced drastic development in the last three decades because the backbone of economic development has changed from agriculture to the manufacturing industry and is now moving towards a knowledge-based economy. There are social changes in the structure of society due to the urbanization process and changes in the economic structure can have negative impacts, such as increased crime, the use of illegal drugs and narcotics, promiscuity and changes in behavior that are not constructive to the community's value system (Sumintono et al., 2012). The main method taken by the government in Malaysia in this regard is the involvement of schools in trying to deal with the negative impacts of social change.

Moral education is the answer, which is a compulsory lesson for all school students in Malaysia. This strategy is none other than an effort to develop human resources who, besides having knowledge and skills, also respect and apply values and morals in their personal lives. The school education curriculum in Malaysia currently divides moral education into two different forms. Islamic religious education for Muslim students and moral education for non-Muslim students, which constitute 40% of the total educational population of Malaysia (Vishalache, 2009). This moral education can be said to be a real form of character education that wants to be instilled in the younger generation of Malaysia, which is an ongoing development since formal schools were introduced by the British (Vishalache, 2010).

II. METHODOLOGY

The research method is a scientific method used to obtain data that has specific uses and purposes. As for what the author uses in this research method, it is qualitative and approaches library research, namely looking for references from relevant articles, books and others.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.2. Character education in Malaysia

Interaction at school is carried out in the learning process in class. Character and moral education are implemented using direct learning methods. Besides the subjects, through the integration of values into each subject. Education outside of school intends to provide situations that help students apply moral values in everyday life. According to Sumintono (2014: 19), another method used by the teacher is the memorization method; where students are asked to memorize moral education material. This happens because teachers do not have the capacity and skills to conduct moral education in the classroom.

According to Bajunid (2004), formal education in Malaysia began in 1816 with the establishment of the Penang Free School on Penang Island. Other schools were later established by the British colonial government in the Peninsular region, such as in Malacca and Singapore which extended to Sabah and Sarawak. After Malaysia gained independence in 1957, the British model education system continued to be maintained and underwent gradual changes in accordance with the mandate of the enactment of the education law in 1957.

Malaysia is a multiethnic country with a total population of 27 million in 2010. The composition of the population is 50% ethnic Malays, ethnic Chinese (24%), indigenous peoples (11%), Indians (7%) and others (7%). The majority of adherents of religion are Muslims (60%), followed by Buddhists (20%), Christians (9%), Hindus (6%) and the rest are Confucianists, Taoists, and animists (Anonymous, 2012). The Malaysian school system experienced a very large and rapid expansion in the 1960s, which was marked by the opening of many teacher education institutions and the high recruitment of teachers (Sumintono et al., 2012).

The occurrence of ethnic riots in 1969 prompted the Malaysian government to launch a new economic policy, one of which was to provide wider access to education for native people (Bajunid, 2008). The end of the confrontation with Indonesia in the late 1960s caused many teachers from Indonesia, especially in mathematics and science subjects, to be recruited to educate

natives because of the similarity of the language of instruction and to address the needs of existing teachers (Sumintono et al., 2012). Since the colonial era until now, education in Malaysia has been fully under the control of the central government, chaired by the Minister of Education. Traditionally, the school system is based on the 6-5-2(1)-4 year pattern, i.e., there are six years of lower (elementary) education, followed by five years of secondary education (which is the equivalent of O level in the UK), both levels of which are compulsory education for all Malaysians; after that, students who have excellent achievements can attend pre-university education for two years (or one year of matriculation education) to continue to attend four years of university education (S1). Currently, there are a total of 5.3 million students enrolled in more than 10,000 elementary and middle schools in thirteen states and three federal counties, of whom 43% (2.296 million people) are high school students (years 7–11) (Vishalache, 2010).

The Malaysian education system employs over four hundred thousand teachers teaching at the primary and secondary school levels, 69% of whom are female teachers (MoE, 2011). As is the case in developing countries, it was the Malaysian Ministry of Teaching that initiated various policy initiatives and their implementation in the school system, starting from the curriculum, assessment system, teacher recruitment and various other standards which, for example, in the late 1970s there were important changes in terms of curriculum, ie all schools that do end up using Bahasa Malaysia as the language of instruction (except for primary level schools as permitted by the education law) (Rahimah, 1998); the central government has also implemented an information technology integration policy in various schools in Malaysia, starting from learning to the administrative system known as the Smart School program since; in terms of the language of instruction, starting in 2003 a policy of teaching mathematics and science with English was implemented for all school levels in Malaysia, but this policy was later withdrawn and teaching returned to Bahasa Malaysia in 2012 (Sumintono, 2010).

In terms of moral and value education, the ministry of teaching made it an integral part of the new curriculum at the primary and secondary school levels starting in the 1980s. The emergence of the new education act law in 1996 explains that the philosophy of national education integrates this (Bajunid, 2008), which aims to form a comprehensive Malaysian human being from various aspects, as stated in the deed: "Education in Malaysia is a continuous effort towards further developing individual potential as a whole and in a unified way to create a balanced and harmonious human being in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual, intellect, and social based on belief in and obedience to God. This endeavor is to give birth to Malaysians who are knowledgeable, skilled, responsible, strive for self-prosperity, and contribute to the harmony and prosperity of society and the country." The emergence of this educational philosophy inevitably brings implications for the need for a new approach in terms of character education, which must be inclusive in teaching in schools after the applicable curriculum.

3.3. Moral Education in Malaysian Schools

Moral education and value education are inseparable from the education system that applies in Malaysia. In the early days of formal education in the colonial era, moral education was given in the form of teaching the Bible, namely subjects given at the high school level specifically for Christian students. For non-Christian students, ethics lessons are given every week, accompanied by a free summary of the Bible and an emphasis on how to be a good person (MoE, 2011).

After Malaysia's independence, the same pattern was applied: only teaching the Bible changed to teaching Islam because Islam is the official religion of the State of Malaysia, and it is given only to Muslim students. For adherents of other religions guaranteed by the constitution, Islamic religious studies should not be forced, as should the teaching of Islamic ethics in learning. The way out is, as previously pioneered by England, introducing moral lessons or value education in classroom learning (Vishalache, 2010). To fill the void in character education for non-Muslim students, in the early 1970s, civics subjects were introduced as compulsory subjects for all non-Muslim students. Because this lesson was not tested in the final exam, it was deemed ineffective, so the school did not consider it important in its implementation. This is due to the orientation of education, which still emphasizes exams, in contrast to Islamic religious studies, which are indeed tested (Chew, 2010).

Based on an in-depth study of the Malaysian education system chaired by Dr. Mahathir as Minister of Teaching at that time, the 1979 Cabinet Report laid the foundation for changes in education in Malaysia (Vishalache, 2009). The Cabinet Report determined the need for moral education to be taught to non-Muslim students and accommodated it in the new elementary school curriculum in 1983, while for secondary schools it began six years later with the implementation of the Middle School Integrated Curriculum (KBSM). Moral lessons are given gradually, starting in the first year for elementary and middle school students. 1993 was the first wave of Malaysian students who were educated with moral education (Vishalache, 2010). The main stipulation in

this moral lesson is that non-Muslim students are required to learn moral education, which is given at the same time as Muslim students study Islamic Religious Education and is included in the subjects tested.

The Curriculum Development Center at the Malaysian Ministry of Teaching then develops the contents of the moral education curriculum, which must reflect the values that exist in Malaysian society.

In the beginning, moral education emphasized the spiritual, human, and social aspects of Malaysia's plural society, which students had to understand. However, its form later changed to determining the main values that can be accepted and must be approved by various existing religious groups (Christians, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianists, Taoists, and others) and other traditional community groups that do not follow a religion formally. (Chew, 2010). A committee was formed to formulate the moral education syllabus that would be taught to non-Muslim students. Finally, sixteen main values (which are referred to as 'pure values') are agreed upon, namely: (1) kindheartedness; (2) independence; (3) high temper (politeness); (4) respect; (5) affection; (6) fairness; (7) freedom; (8) courage; (9) physical and mental cleanliness; (10) honesty; (11) crafts; (12) cooperation; (13) simplicity; (14) gratitude; (15) rationality; and (16) community spirit (gotong royong) (Chew, 2010). These 'pure values' are derived from religious values, traditions, and habits of the existing society while also considering universal aspects (Rahimah, 1998).

All of these values are closely related to everyday life—the relationship between humans in the family, among colleagues, in the community, or in an organization. The moral education syllabus does not establish a hierarchy of pure values or the order in which they are taught. The sixteen pure values must be taught to students so that they will continue to understand and be embedded in them (Chew, 2010). Of course, the scope and depth provided will depend on the grade level and maturity of the student. Moral education is carried out through interactions inside and outside of school, which aim to provide situations that help students apply pure values in everyday life. In the examination of moral subjects (Vishalache, 2010), each has its own dynamics. Since morality is subjective, objective assessment is an ongoing challenge that seems endless. After various revisions of the testing system, the assessment was finally carried out in two aspects: written knowledge and practical work, namely student activities in the physical and affective domains (Sumintono, 2010).

3.4. Development and Challenges of Character Education

Moral education is given to non-Muslim students when Muslim students study Islamic religion. Through the implementation of the Middle School Curriculum, moral education is carried out from elementary schools to high schools. Malaysia has implemented 16 values in character education. These values are pure values. The 16 values include: kindness, independence, high humility (courtesy), respect, compassion, justice, freedom, courage, physical and mental health, honesty, craftsmanship, cooperation, simplicity, gratitude, rationality, and the spirit of mutual cooperation.

These pure values are derived from religious values, traditions, and community habits. In the development of the 16 values, they were revised into 7 values: values related to self-development, values related to family, values related to the surrounding environment, values related to patriotism, values related to human rights, values related to democracy, and values related to security and harmony. Values education in Malaysia is carried out through social interaction methods at school and outside of school. Interaction at school is carried out in a direct learning process, both by moral education teachers and by class teachers.

Moral education outside of school is carried out by creating concrete situations to apply moral values. Moral education that teaches pure values as emphasized by the curriculum in the classroom is mostly done by direct teaching, and at the same time, these values must be integrated into the subjects (Vishalache, 2009). This is certainly a burdensome thing, especially for teachers, because at the same time they are required to be role models. If this is implemented by all subject teachers, it becomes potentially confusing for students.

The teaching of moral values as a form of character education has long been known to be a complex process. Especially in the multicultural context of Malaysia, this should be more suitable given the spirit so that, in the end, students are able to think independently and draw conclusions about moral values that do not conflict with their beliefs (Abdullah, 2006). Education that is based on certain values that have been determined to be taught, in fact, does not have the expected effect on the character of students. In the Malaysian context, because the teacher does not know how to apply this precisely in the lesson and develop effective learning scenarios, what happens is to incorporate 'pure values,' which are thought to be relevant in the subject matter,

and write them down in the lesson plan (Norhayati & Siew, 2004; Chew, 2010). This is an easy way out for teachers, as well as avoiding sensitive issues regarding moral values. Thus, it is not surprising that the measure of 'success' for teachers is that students can mention the pure grades given.

IV. CONCLUSION

Education has a major influence on improving the quality and behavior of people's lives because education is a medium for transforming one's personality and self-development. The implementation of character education in formal education environments, especially in basic education, has an effective influence on shaping the character of elementary school students in order to develop national character. Moral education given to elementary school students in the application of pure values has its own challenges and implications in the school system in Malaysia related to the learning patterns applied, curriculum content, and evaluation system carried out. At the same time, various alternative efforts to teach moral education as a form of character education were also carried out to find forms that were in accordance with the conditions and situation of modern Malaysia.

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