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Character Education to Boost the Quality of Students' Soft Skills in the Indonesian English Class

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Abstract: Teaching English serves as a tool to teach students how to communicate in workplace. Character education taught in English can influence some of the ways students live in society, in terms of ethics, philosophy and principles. Moral education, as a part of character education, can be included in language learning in three important ways: integrated into school practice with an emphasis on literacy, socialized by moral content, and applied to course materials. This research provides description on developing human resources quality through character education. There are 38 respondents in this research, 36 students and 2 lecturers. They are chosen to obtain more objective data. The implementation of character education in teaching process happens from the planning to evaluating process. In planning, it shows that most students already know character education and its importance in higher education. In enacting process, most students implement moral values in their daily life. It makes their soft skill quality increase, both in personal and professional qualities. Last process is evaluating. In this process, some students think that the lecturers always help them internalize character education by implicitly including it in the problem sheet and the scoring rubrics.

Key words: character education, character value, method of character education, soft skill

Abstrak: Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris berguna sebagai alat untuk mengajari mahasiswa cara berkomunikasi di tempat kerja. Pendidikan

karakter yang diajarkan dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggris dapat mempengaruhi cara mahasiswa berinteraksi dalam masyarakat, dalam hal etika, filosofi, dan prinsip. Pendidikan moral, sebagai bagian dari pendidikan karakter, dapat dimasukkan dalam pembelajaran Bahasa dan pengembangan karakter dalam tiga langkah penting: terintegrasi dengan praktek kampus dengan penekanan pada literasi, disosialisasikan pada konten moral, dan diaplikasikan pada materi perkuliahan. Penelitian ini mendeskripsikan tentang pengembangan kualitas sumber daya manusia melalui pendidikan karakter. Terdapat 38 responden dalam penelitian ini yang terdiri dari 36 mahasiswa dan 2 dosen. Responden tersebut dipilih untuk mempertahankan data yang obyektif. Implementasi pendidikan karakter pada proses pembelajaran berlangsung dari proses perencanaan sampai proses evaluasi. Dalam proses perencanaan, terlihat kebanyakan mahasiswa sudah mengetahui tentang pendidikan karakter dan pentingnya pendidikan karakter dalam pendidikan tinggi. Dalam proses pelaksanaan, kebanyakan mahasiswa menerapkan nilai-nilai moral dalam kehidupan sehari-hari mereka. Hal ini membuat kualitas keterampilan nonteknis mereka meningkat, baik kualitas personal dan professional. Proses terakhir adalah proses evaluasi. Dalam proses ini, beberapa mahasiswa berpendapat bahwa dosen selalu membantu mereka menginternalisasikan pendidikan karakter dengan memasukkan secara implisit pada lembar soal dan rubrik penilaian.

Kata kunci: pendidikan karakter, nilai karakter, metode pembelajaran karakter, keterampilan nonteknis

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development goals (SDGs) are the agenda of the United Nation for peace and prosperity for people in the world. The global challenge to achieve sustainable development goals requires all institutions to take a central role, including higher education institution. The main role of higher education is to prepare human capital and to produce science and technology to support sustainable development goals in form of sustainable national development. Human capital, for instance, is regarded the most important aspect to meet sustainable development goals. The competencies of human capital and the need of industry change very quickly and are difficult to predict. Therefore, education has to be flexible and continue to interact with developments in the industrial world and the dynamics of society.

Merdeka Belajar or freedom to learn policy comes as a solution for this issue. It is issued by the Minister of Education and Culture on Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia with Regulation No. 3 Year 2020 about National Standard of Higher Education. This policy provides flexibility for students to gain knowledge. It is not only knowledge, but students are also able to gain character value, knowledge and skills from a very diverse source. This program not only enriches and expands the learning universe for students, but also directly brings the real world to higher education. Industry and the world of work link and match with universities to hone students to have competencies, both hard and soft skills. According to Nizam (2021), the core characteristics of the learning achievement of *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) consist of three major points, namely character value, science vision and market signals.

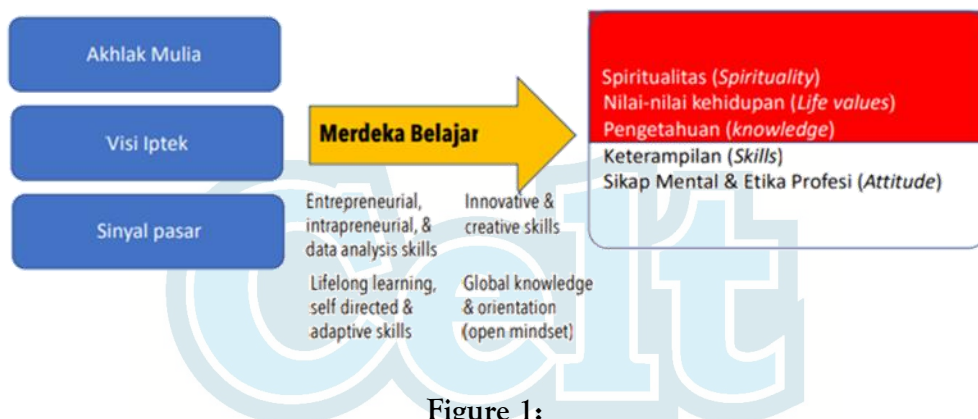


Figure 1:
Basic Characteristics of *Merdeka Belajar*

Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) policy gives a big chance for the government to create sustainable human resource development from the education sector. It applies in the primary and secondary school level curriculum in Indonesia, known as the 2013 Curriculum, which has been integrated in the classroom since 2013. Currently, universities integrate it through freedom to learn policy. The curriculum used in universities involve all aspects, including character education. Character education is incorporated in all levels of education and is applied in almost all courses from primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Teaching can integrate character education in its process. Teaching language, especially English, can integrate character education material in its practice. Teaching English is regarded important because English plays important role in literacy and critical thinking on students to face global challenges. Teaching English also serves as a tool to teach them how to

communicate well in their future workplace. Character education taught in English can also influence some of the ways students live in society, in terms of ethics, philosophy and principles. Moral education, as a part of character education, can be included in language learning and in character development in three important ways. The three ways, proposed by Thongrin (2018) is based on the practicality suggested by several studies, are (1) character education integrated into school practice with an emphasis on literacy, (2) the character of students is socialized by moral content, and (3) character education is applied to course materials. Those three ways are meant to create productive citizens with a global perspective but not uprooted from the cultural roots of their nation.

Reorienting and transforming ways to develop character education into a system are going to strengthen the mission of producing outstanding human capital and building dignified national sovereignty and civilization. Character education is expected to create productive Indonesians who are cautious, competitive, creative, innovative, and adaptive. To analyze whether character education is a way of developing students' character in university, several things are going to discuss in this research, namely identifying whether character education is reflected in the lesson plans and teaching materials, knowing the application of character education in the classroom, knowing students' attitude towards character education, and knowing the way students reflect moral values in social life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Character Education

Character education is one of fundamental aspects to create sustainable human resource development. Thomas Lickona (cited in Adams, 2011) describes character education as “the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue.” Deliberate comes as the main characteristic of the description. It means that character education does not come directly without any treatments given. Adults need to teach children about character education through example and exhortation to make them young adults of good character. It is supported with (Kamaruddin, 2012) opinion on cultivating good character. He states “The building of the character of students in each learning environment means the institution's efforts in the field of character building. Training or development is synonymous with coaching. Now more encouraged the formation of school culture in conjunction with educational institutions. A culture of noble

character is one of the school cultures chosen. The term "forming moral values" came from this in school culture." (2012, pp. 223-230)

School culture should leave good imprint on students. To ideally achieve it, character education needs to be integrated in the learning process. The learning process aims not only to create a competent student, but it also aims to make students know, aware, and internalize the character values. Some ways to boost this process is by introducing the character values to students, facilitating the awareness of moral values to students, and internalizing those values into students' daily habit, both in the classroom and outside the classroom.

B. Character Value

Eva (2015) defines character education. She defines it similar to human basic character, in which it is rooted from universal moral values from religion, or well-known as The Golden Rule. Character education has a clear purpose if it is in line with those basic characters. Nadlir (2016) identifies moral values into five main values, i.e., value of human and God, value of human and oneself, value of human and others, value of human and environment, and value of human and nation. Those values can be put in the table as follow:

Table 1:
Character Value

Human and God	Human and oneself	Human and others	Human and environment	Human and nation
- Religious	- Honest - Responsible - Healthy lifestyle - Discipline - Hard-work - Confident - Entrepreneurship - Logic, creative and innovative - Independent - Curious - Learner	- Respect one and other's right - Obey social rules - Appreciate others' work - Polite - Democratic	- Aware of environment condition	- Nationalist - Respect diversity

C. Method of Character Education

Megawangi (2016) proposes four methods in character education, i.e., knowing the good, loving the good, desiring the good, and acting the good. Knowing the good means applying character education by emphasizing on cognitive (knowledge) aspect. This method is regarded important to raise good habit. When someone has a good habit, he can have self-awareness on moral values. For example, when someone is honest, he is not going to steal, cheat, nor lie. Megawangi (2016) further explains that if someone does not steal because he is afraid of punishment, he maybe not has the honesty value in him. Hence, knowing the good is needed to raise someone's love on good habit. Next method is loving the good. This part is in emotional aspect and is regarded the most difficult phase to teach, unless someone is exposed to this part since he is in younger age. This emotional aspect consists of two parts, i.e., self-censorship (internal control) and external control. The internal control includes guilty and shame feeling for not doing good. It also comes up in social level, such as sympathy and empathy to others. While, external control includes rules and punishment. If someone is used to doing good due to his love for doing good, it is going to raise feeling to desire the good. Desiring the good is a concept of raising someone's love and will to do good. Someone's willing to do good also includes in emotional aspect and it comes from someone's love to do good. To make it happen, role of lecturers is significant to raise and train someone to love the good and act it out. Acting the good is a result of the other three elements, i.e., knowing the good, loving the good, and desiring the good. The higher moral knowing and moral feeling someone has, the greater passion someone has to know the good. Those four methods are a set of standardized method in character education, so they cannot stand alone nor leave one behind. Character education is going to be success if it is taught consistently.

METHOD

This research was action research using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in the analysis. Primary to the research, the researchers conducted pre-observation step to get existing data of condition of character education in the class. Questionnaire for both lecturers and students were used as the media to get existing condition of character education in the class. They were used as the data to plan activities that were going to conduct in Cycle I. The research was conducted in two cycles, i.e., Cycle I and Cycle II.

In Cycle I, the researchers observed students' attitude towards character education, both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Students were also asked to fill in questionnaire as their pre-test. Cycle I was designed to show the students' attitude towards character education the class and to arrange possible activities in Cycle II. Cycle II was conducted to know the improvement of students' attitude towards character education after being given some treatments. Students are also asked to fill in questionnaire in the end of the cycle as their post-test.

Conducting this research, there were two subjects, i.e., lecturers and students. Lecturers played an important role in teaching learning process while creating good-character students. This reason led to researchers' decision to put them as the subject of the research. The students chosen in this research were the second semester students of English Literature study program at Jenderal Soedirman University. There were 36 students who were involved as the subject of the research.

Some instruments were used to obtain and analyze the data. They were observation and questionnaire. Observation was used to get real data of the students' attitude towards character education while lecturers were teaching. The researchers observed the students in the classroom and outside the classroom. The observation outside the classroom was meant to identify whether the lesson plan reflected character education in the higher education level or not. Questionnaire was given to both lecturers and students before Cycle I began and in the end of Cycle II. There were two types of questionnaires used, i.e., open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires. The questionnaires consisted of some questions and statements which was referred to Megawangi (2016). Megawangi proposed four methods in character education, i.e., knowing the good, loving the good, desiring the good, and acting the good. The result of the questionnaires was then analyzed to compare the students' attitude in Cycle I and Cycle II towards character education in higher education level. At last, conclusion could be drawn from the data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research was done in the second semester students of English Language and Literature Department, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman. Action research was conducted to analyze character education as students' soft skills in teaching learning process. The research was conducted in two cycles, in which each cycle was conducted in two meetings. It was also conducted in three steps, i.e., planning, enacting, and evaluating.

The first cycle was done by implementing one character education in the teaching learning process. The chosen character education was politeness. Politeness in broader context refers not only to the language politeness, but also to the nonverbal aspect, such as behavior, faces mimics, and voice tone (Bowden, 2010). In the first cycle, implicitly implementing politeness education in teaching learning process affected students' interaction, both interaction with the lecturer and among students. It could be seen by students' choice of words when talking to the lecturer and friends. The students chose the magic words before and during uttering their opinions, such as by saying "May I ...?", "thank you", "excuse me", etc. It resulted in more polite communication in the class. It also put students' understanding that being and acting polite in daily life context were beneficial for them.

The next cycle focused on implementing another character education in human and other relationship, i.e., obedience to social norms. Myers (1999) and Miller (1999), as in Lincht (2008) define norms as understood rules for accepted and expected behavior. Obedience to norms could be defined as understanding social rules for accepted and expected behavior. This thing was crucial for students' interaction because students needed to communicate with many parties in accepted manner. Implicitly implementing obedience to social norms while teaching had some positive effects to students. Students learnt what thing was accepted and what was not accepted in social communication. It could be seen from one simple sample. Students chose and wore appropriate clothes in specific occasion. It was also strengthened with the material in the book which drew clear view on what should be worn in specific occasion. This part was also a part of obeying the norms, because if students did not wear appropriate clothes to the appropriate situation, it would cause unacceptable response from the society. Hence, they also realized that obeying social norms was needed to get along with others well.

After conducting Cycle I and Cycle II, the researchers did a post-test in the form of a questionnaire to analyze the occurrence of character education in learning media, such as curriculum and lesson plan. The questionnaire was given to both students and lecturers as respondents to obtain more objective data. It was divided into three parts, i.e., questionnaire on planning, enacting, and evaluating. The first part was questionnaire on planning. This part covered the initial understanding of character education. 37 respondents (97,4%) knew about character education and all respondents (100%) strongly agreed that character education was needed in higher education. It showed that both students and lecturers already realized the importance of character education. Another response came up. 36 respondents (94,7%) mentioned that character

education was already put in higher study. It showed a good signal that higher education already put character education in their learning. 32 respondents (84,2%) argued that character education was already put in the lesson plan, while 36 respondents (94,7%) argued that character education was already put in the materials. This practice showed good application in boosting character education in higher education.

Table 2:
Students and lecturers' responses on planning

No.	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Do you know character education?	37	1
2.	Do you think character education is needed in higher education?	38	0
3.	Is character education put in the curriculum?	36	2
4.	Is character education reflected in the lesson plan?	32	6
5.	Is character education reflected in the materials?	36	2

The result in table 2 showed that almost all respondents were in one voice that character education was already implemented in planning the material in higher education.

The second part of the questionnaire was about enacting the character education in teaching learning process. It covered the implementation of character education in daily life context. The result showed that all respondents (100%) understood and knew about moral value and its implementation in daily life. It showed good practice because both students and lecturers knew that soft skill, in form of moral values, was needed to improve their personal and professional qualities. All respondents (100%) also felt guilty when they did something bad. This situation created a good basis of someone's soft skill, while almost all respondents (97,4%) felt embarrassed when they did something bad. Only 1 respondent (2,6%) did not feel embarrassed when he did something bad. It was not a good example, but it could be improved with further implementation of character education. 35 respondents (92,1%) responded to the punishment when they did something bad. They understood that when they did something bad, they would get punishment. They also comprehended that social norms played important roles dealing with character education. All respondents (100%) had a willing to always implement the moral

values and social norms in their daily acts. All respondents (100%) also felt that the implementation of character education related to their emotional intelligence. The result showed that all respondents already built good character in themselves, as shown in building good character, 37 respondents (97,4%) argued that lecturers played important roles in it. All respondents (100%) appreciated that the lecturers always motivated the students in building character values. It implied that lecturers already enacted good practice of character education. It could also be said that lecturers built good example for their students.

Table 3:
Students and lecturers' responses on enacting

No.	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Do you know moral values?	38	0
2.	Do you realize the importance of moral values in daily life?	38	0
3.	Do you feel guilty when doing bad thing?	38	0
4.	Do you feel embarrassed when doing bad thing?	37	1
5.	Have your ever got penalty or punishment when doing bad thing?	35	3
6.	Are you willing to implement the moral values in your life?	38	0
7.	Do you think your lecturers affect you in implementing moral values?	37	1
8.	Do you think your lecturers motivate you in implementing moral values?	38	0
9.	Do you think implementing moral values affects your emotional intelligence?	38	0

The last part of the questionnaire was evaluating the process. It covered the evaluation of character education in teaching learning process. Evaluation process is regarded as one important step in teaching learning activity as it reviews and evaluates students' comprehension of the materials. The result of the questionnaire showed various answers. 23 respondents (60,5%) stated that lecturers already put moral values in the problem sheet during the test, while 35 respondents (92,1%) stated that lecturers put the moral values in the instruction implicitly. The moral values were implicitly written in the

instruction to test students' comprehension and understanding on building character education in them, such as do the test honestly. If the students did the test in honest way, the lecturer could see that they already applied good character education. 23 respondents (60,5%) felt that the lecturers also put moral values in one of the scoring rubrics. This way made students want to show their best character in teaching learning process.

Table 4:
Students and lecturers' responses on evaluating

No.	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Do your lecturers include moral values on the problem sheet of tests?	23	15
2.	Do your lecturers include moral values in the instruction of the test?	35	3
3.	Are moral values included in one of the scoring rubrics?	23	15

Regarding the result of the analysis, it could be seen that character education has integrated in teaching activity in higher study level, starting from planning, enacting, to evaluating processes. The practice of implementing character education was surely helpful to achieve sustainable development goals and was fruitful for students to face global competition.

CONCLUSION

This research provided description on developing human resources quality through character education. The implementation of character education in teaching process happened from the planning to evaluating process. In planning, it showed that most students already know character education and its importance in higher education. They also argued that character education already puts in the lesson plan and materials. It helped them internalize character education more. In enacting process, most students implemented moral values in their daily life. It made their soft skill quality increase, both in personal and professional qualities. Last process is evaluating. In this process, some students thought that the lecturers always helped them

internalize character education by implicitly including it in the problem sheet and the scoring rubrics.

This research suggested several implications for researchers. First, character education is seemed beneficial for students to increase their soft skill. Second, the role of lecturers in internalizing character education is important. It can be done implicitly to make the students ease to implement. The study limitation is that it involved only students in one academic year; however, the researchers recommend to take larger sample involved in future research.

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