

The Importance of Character Education: Comparison of the Implementation of Character Education in Uganda and Indonesia

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Abstract

The implementation of character education has become an important issue in the world since the impact of its implementation is significant. This study aimed at finding out the importance of the character education through observation of its implementation in Uganda and Indonesia since both countries are categorized as developing countries. The data were taken through library research and interviewing the practitioners. The results showed that the implementation of character education has big impact on the children development, attitude and behaviors. This study suggested that all of countries may apply the character education at all educational levels. The character education also should be integrated and stated in the curriculum.

Key words: *character education, implementation, Indonesia, Uganda*

Introduction

In the 20th century, education throughout the world aimed more on the development of scientific and technical character. In the process, the more traditional conception of education, which stressed the development of a person's character in preparation for life, became more and more marginalized. This has caused many difficulties faced by humans. On the other hand, in the 21st century humanity is facing severe difficulties at societal, economical and personal levels. Societally, we are struggling with greed manifested in financial instability, climate change, personal privacy invasions, and intolerance manifested in religious fundamentalism, racial crises and political absolutism. Economically, globalisation and innovation are rapidly changing our paradigms of business. (Charles, *et al*, 2015).

These can be solved using our power to control and manipulate our physical universe to grow and creating a channel that power through morality

grows too. The heart is the core of human character and from it arises the deepest motivation for all moral striving. Since the heart is the source of the fundamental impulse for relatedness, it is what motivates a person to yearn for the joy of loving and being loved, the satisfaction of valuing and being valued. As a plant must be cultivated with love and care in order to become a healthy and beautiful plant, so too a child's heart must be cultivated with love and care if he is to grow to a healthy maturity. This can be achieved by use of character education which helps in cultivation of the hearts of the children (Robert & June, 2006).

The character education is very important and it is now a necessity because the relation of life is getting degraded of characters (Setiawan, 2013:116). Therefore, character education must be able to internalize all positive values as the foundation of thinking, being and acting. On the other hand, Zamroni (2011) explains that the character education terminology provides a view of various aspects of learning in order to develop a personality. In the learning process, one must link between morality education with various aspects of personal and social learners in every day life. For example: reasoning, social and emotional learning, life skills education, caring and loving community, preventing violence, resolve conflict, and ethical life. In other words, the character education with regard to the guidelines of daily life that is needed to make a decision and solving the problem faced.

Both Uganda and Indonesia are categorized as developing countries experiencing conditions of poverty, low education or have limited opportunities for accessing education, poor health services, and lack of suitable housing and employment opportunities. All this is due to social, economic and political factors which include high reproduction rates, low quality of education which cannot help students acquire enough creative schools for self-sustainability, among others (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2016). However, the most problem faced by two countries is lacking a good character. The children as the agent of change showed that they are monopolized by violence through movie,

TV shows, music and social media. It made them lacking of good character. It becomes main concern and important issue for governments.

As we know education is one of the best ways in solving those problems especially in developing countries. The main pillar in creating a character of a person through education is character education. Through achieving high education, the people are expected to not only have high knowledge about the world but also have a good character which is more important. Wibowo (2012:34) explains that education should be an active part in preparing the quality of human resources (HR) is educated and able to face the challenges of the times, because the character education is one of a system to embed the character values to all citizens community through formal or informal education, which includes knowledge, awareness, volition, and action to carry out the whole range of values. Therefore, this study intended to show the importance of character education through comparing the implementation of character education in Uganda and Indonesia since both of the country are having some problems.

Literature Review

Character Education

The character Education (CE) is an education approach designed to guide and support young people to accomplish the three most essential goals in life, namely: (1) becoming a person of mature character, (2) establishing loving relationships and family, and (3) making a contribution to society. As an approach, the character education includes a school curriculum and program, family and community educational programs, as well as embedded service learning for all ages (Robert & June, 2006). The character education is teaching children about basic human values, including honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect. The goal is to raise children to become morally responsible, self-disciplined citizens (Berkowitz and Bier, 2005). Berkowitz and Bier (2005) also mentioned that the character education is also the deliberate effort to develop good character based on core virtues that are good for individual and good for society.

The character education achieves the essential goals in life through cultivating in students' personal growth and ability to fulfil social and community responsibilities as global citizens and being essential in acquisition and strengthening of the qualities of education (knowledge, skills, character, and metacognition), values (ideals and concepts, and the capacity to make wise choices for the well-rounded life, and a thriving society (Charles, *at al*, 2015).

According SamaniandHariyanto(2013:46)thereare 18valuescontainedincharacter educationasfollows;religious,honest,tolerance,discipline,hard work,independent, creative,democratic,patriotism,curiosity,friends,love peace,love reading,environmental care,socialcare, recognizeexcellence, respectandresponsibility.From thosevalues,there arefour values thatsynergize withmulticulturalvalues,namely;tolerance,democracy, mutual respect, and peace.

Ontheotherhand,Lickona(1991)explains thatmoral educationthatproduces character,itcontains threecomponentsofgoodcharacter(componentofgoodcharacter), namely:theknowledgeofthemoral(moralknowing),asenseofmorality (moralfeeling), andmoralconduct(moralaction).Thethreecomponentsofcharactereducation shouldbe awakenedrelated,sothevalueofeducation presented becomescomplexwhenbasedalso with noblevaluesoriginatingfrom the cultureofthenation itself. There areseveralreviews onthesubjectofcharactereducationintoanationalissueislearning shouldbeopentothe public,andthebasis fordecision-making atthebasiceducationlevelanduniversity.The charactereducation asoneofthemostneed,demoralization,moraldegradationand knowledge,othercausesbirthdiscourse character educationisanencouragementtoachieve theidealsofcountrygoldinthefuture,andinordertomeetthelofty goal ofnational education.

Findings and Discussion

In order to find the data related to the character education in both countries, the researchers do library researches to find the importance of character education and its implementation in both countries as many as possible. After finding the data, the researchers divided the main results into three categories. They are the importance of character education, the character education in Uganda and the character education in Indonesia.

The importance of character education

A character refers to all agency, attitudes, behaviours, dispositions, mindset, personality, temperament, and values. Therefore, character education is a type of education which is intended to cultivate character qualities in students. Character qualities are the abilities of students to effectively use what they know. Character education is very important in the following ways; (i) Character education helps in development of the quality of mindfulness.

This is associated with other qualities such as wisdom, self-management, self-awareness, among others. These are important in overcoming the challenges of the 21st centuries at personal level; (ii) It also helps in development of curiosity among students which helps them to be open-minded, explorative, and passionate; (iii) It helps in development of courage among students. Being courageous, the students develop associated characters such bravely, confidence, risk taking, fortitude, among others. All these are important in fighting the financial instability which is greatly affecting the world; (iv) Students can become resilience through acquisition of character education. Resilience acquired helps the students to be self-disciplined, diligent, perseverant and able to face the economic challenges; (v) Ethics among students is also a character developed by character education among students. the ethical quality is associated with benevolence, humanness, integrity, respect, among others. This helps in overcoming society instabilities hence in promoting peace and development; (vi) Character education also helps in Leadership character development among students. This is essential in development of responsible, dependable, accountable, reliable, and humble

leaders who can make wise choices for the wellbeing of the society (Charles, *et al*, 2015).

The Discourse of character education above, supported by the opinion of Koesman (2007:134) which states that the objective character education should be placed within the framework of a dynamic dialectical, in the form of individual responses to the social and cultural surrounding, to be able to put himself into perfect, so the potentials will be fully developed that make them more humane. In line with previous opinion, character education goal is to improve the quality of education and the results of the education towards the formation of character and noble character of learners as a whole, integrated and balance (Muslich, 2011:81). Furthermore, character education goal is to improve the personal disposition of individuals as proposed by Arthur (2003:11) that "the aim of the institute was to improve the habits, dispositions, and general character of the children". Thus, character education aims to improve habits, character, and character in children.

Generally, character education goal is to encourage the birth of good children. Grow up in a good character, children will grow up with the capacity and commitment to do best things and do everything right, and tend to have a purpose in life. Effective character education is found in a school environment that enables all learners demonstrate their potential to achieve a very important goal. Based on some opinions above, it can be concluded that the goal of character education is more focused on instilling values and reform of life, so can be fully create the character and noble character of learners, integrated and balance, and can be performed continuously in daily life-day. This becomes very important because of the character education has a strategic position in creating the human with an noble character. Therefore, we realize that the character education is very important in human life.

Character education in Uganda

Uganda is a land locked country located in East Africa. The country is bordered by Kenya in the East; South Sudan in the North; Democratic Republic of

Congo in the West; Tanzania in the South; and Rwanda in South West and has an estimated total population of 42.9 million persons. Uganda has one of the youngest and most rapidly growing populations in the world with 47.9% of the population aged 0-14 years (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, UBOS, 2016).

Like other countries such as Indonesia, in Uganda there are national strategies and goals which are intended to ensure that the citizens can acquire education. The national strategies and goals such as the constitution of the republic of Uganda in chapter 4 (Protection and promotion of other fundamental and other human rights and freedoms) in Article XVIII, it clearly states that; (i) the state shall promote free and compulsory basic education; (ii) the State shall take appropriate measures to afford every citizen equal opportunity to attain the highest educational standard possible; (iii) Individuals, religious bodies and other nongovernmental organisations shall be free to found and operate educational institutions if they comply with the general educational policy of the country and maintain national standards (Government of Uganda, GoU, 2006). Also, national strategies such as the education act (2008) clearly states that “basic education shall be provided and enjoyed as a right by all persons”. More also, Education For Sustainable Development, (ESD) Implementation Strategy (2010), proposed improvement of the quality of education through deliberate review of the content, processes and methods that include the curriculum process, learning materials, facilities and human resources. In this strategy, due attention was given to Education Sustainable Development values and Ethics which include; (i) Respect and care for the ‘community of life, (ii) Social and economic justice, (iii) Ecological integrity, and (iv) democracy, no-violence and peace. However, despite all these national strategies and goals, it is not clearly stated anywhere about the inclusion of character education in the education system of the country (Uganda National Commission for UNESCO, 2010).

Despite the great importance of character education, from the study it was found out that there is no clear outline and plan for the implementation of character education in all the national strategies and goals in relation to education in Uganda. This implies that Uganda’s education is still aimed at development of

only knowledge and skills without developing the character qualities. Therefore, the study found no any implication of character education in Uganda.

The missing of the character education in this country caused many conflicts in their life. One of the samples is the newest news in Uganda stated in the Washington post 'The Uganda's parliament taken off the air after brawl breaks out between lawmakers'. It was really chaos in the parliaments. They hurled chairs at each other and swung microphone like swords, men were torn from the room by their blazers and woman by their dresses and some people wailed and cried. Those situations are the picture of lacking the character education in their life. Lindsay Kukunda in dispatch.ug mentioned that the Ugandan lack of discipline and the ability to see things through to the end. She also mentioned that the number of bad behaviors such as drinking and beating the family members still can be found easily. Many problems come up either in economic, education, social, politic, and culture since there is no character education in their curriculum or their education system.

Character Education in Indonesia

The application of the character education has been formulated as religious education and civic education whose main program is merely introduction to values cognitively or, at the most, affectively. True character education should expose students to the introduction of values cognitively, the internalization of the values affectively, and ultimately the application of the values in real life. The presence of curriculum 2013 covering character education dominantly brings a hope for the betterment of students, particularly their morality. However, several significant problems in the curriculum 2013 still occurred (Kemendikbud, 2013). Those include socialization which are less massive, textbooks which are not ready, instructors or trainers of teachers whose inadequate competence, insufficient quantity and quality of training for teachers, and evaluation tools for character which are not yet clear. Some of these constraints indicate that the curriculum 2013 has not been ready to be implemented. These constraints will impact students negatively and reduce the value of nobility of the curriculum to build a generation with noble character. Instead of being a solution, the curriculum is even to be a new problem.

The history of Indonesian education began in 1945, when Indonesia got its independence from Japan colonization. Since 1945, Indonesia has used 12 different curriculums, which are in order implemented in 1945, 1947, 1955, 1966, 1968, 1973, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013. Character education, in this case, has specifically been characterized by the teaching of religion and civics at formal schools since 1945 and by the presence of guidance and counseling service since 1975. Guidance and counseling, either as a subject or a learning support service, was firstly implemented informally without national curriculum instruction in 1958 in a high school in Jogjakarta. In 1975, the Ministry of Education finally included the recommendation that elementary, junior, and senior high schools must have guidance and counseling center. A year later, it was also recommended to vocational schools. To support this program, UPI had basically opened the Department of Guidance and Counseling in 1963 and started producing guidance and counseling specialists in the area of education. Few years later, some other universities in Indonesia began to offer similar programs.

Along the journey of character education in Indonesia, guidance and counseling center, together with teachers, has played a key role in students' character building. Guidance and counseling center is the place where students' code of conduct is created, and where students who violate it are sent to. In Curriculum 1985, the task of the center was added as a place where students, in this case high school students, are guided to think of what college degree and career they want to pursue in the future. Therefore, in other word, the main tasks of the center are to deal with students who have both academic and non-academic problems at school, and to guide students to specify what they want to study after they graduate from school. In the Curriculum 1994 up to now, the task of guidance and counseling is not only done by guidance and counseling center, but also teachers. A certain teacher, usually a classroom advisor, is given a task to supervise and guide a certain number of students. They work collaboratively with counseling centers, in dealing with students' conduct as well as students' academic and non-academic problems and progresses.

As also mentioned previously, however, many have pointed out the phenomenon of social demoralization and social unrest in almost all sectors of life in Indonesia. It is for these reasons that the Ministry of Indonesia decided to renew Curriculum 2006, as the

revised version of Curriculum 2004, into Curriculum 2013, which focuses not only on students' academic achievement but also character building. Kemendiknas (2013) mentions four basis of the development of Curriculum 2013: (1) future challenges in globalization, the advancement of technology, environmental problems, the convergence of science and technology, and knowledge-based economic development, (2) skills required to face futures involving the ability to communicate, think critically and wisely, include morality perspective in a social problem, become an effective citizen, and be tolerant and respectful to different opinion, and (3) emerging social phenomenon in the society, e.g. teenager delinquency, drugs use, corruption, plagiarism, cheating on tests, and other social unrests, and (4) public assumption that Indonesian education has primarily concerned more on cognitive aspect, but not on character building. The pattern has been clear that the Ministry of Education has tried to maximize all potentials at school to collaboratively work on the issue.

Since Indonesia applied the character education, there are many positive impacts in the way Indonesian people live. As the result of the character education, the students have high respects to their parents, the elder people and the teacher. It can be seen through the way they greet them. In Indonesia usually, the children will do handshaking through putting the elders' hand on the head. It shows how respects they are in their life.

The character education also effect in the people live. Indonesian are regarded as being very tolerate. Indonesia consists of more than 700 races, six different religions and a thousand islands, but it does not make Indonesian worst. On the contrary, the differences make Indonesia great since they can live in peace. Although, the Islam and Javanese is the biggest religion and race in this country, but it does not make Islam marginalized the other religions and races. George B. Whitfield III mentioned that Indonesian culture as amazing since they came with loyalty to a hierarchical structure or authority, conflict avoidance, subjugation ti nature, face and social shame and relaxed time perspective. Indonesian is also known as very friendly ad love to make friends. They also prefer to be in a group than life individually. Those good characters in Indonesia are not come up by itself but those are the impact of character education which is implemented explicitly in the curriculum and implicitly in the social or moral values. The impact of applying character education is also feel by the foreigners who come to

Indonesia. Many foreigners feel safe and enjoy when they live in Indonesia. Most of them surprised with the way of live in Indonesia and the tolerance in Indonesia. Since the applying the character education have many advantages and benefits for human life, we propose the way of implementing character education.

The way of implementing Character Education

Learning activities in order to develop the character of the students is one of a very important part. Learning strategies can use contextual approach as the concept of teaching and learning that helps teachers and students find connections between what is taught with real-world situations. Contextual learning includes several strategies (Mulyasa, 2013:88), namely: (a) problem-based learning, (b) cooperative learning, (c) project-based learning, (d) learning services, and (e) work-based learning. The fifth strategy can give a nurturant effect to the development of students' character. In line with the statement above the results showed that the model of effective character education is to use a comprehensive approach (Zuchdi, Prasetyo, and Masruri, 2011). Meanwhile, Zuchdi (2014:4) also describes an implementation strategy of teaching character education areas follows: (a) integrate the content of curriculum that has been formulated into all subjects, (b) integrate character education into daily activities at school, (c) integrate character education in the programmed activities, (d) establishing communication and cooperation between schools and students' parents.

Character education learning strategies can also be done with a variety of methods including inculcation, exemplary, and soft skill development. The whole method and approach, if implemented correctly, it will easily achieve the goal of character education. In addition the school must prepare creatively in order to develop innovative learning, so as to produce teaching and learning more effective and meaningful.

Conclusion

The character education goal is to encourage the birth of good children. Grow up in a good character, children will grow up with the capacity and commitment to do best

things and do everything right, and tend to have a purpose in life. Effective character education is found in a school environment that enables all learners demonstrate their potential to achieve a very important goal. This becomes very important because of the character education has a strategic position in creating the human with an noble character. Therefore, we realize that the character education is very important in human life. Therefore, we can conclude that the character education is very important to apply in both countries. The lacking character education like in Uganda will cause many problems related to human life, on the other hand the implementation of character education like in Indonesia will affect many positive impacts in the human life.

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