



Cultivating elementary school students' characters through Neo-Humanistic Education

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Abstract

Character education has become a primary concern in the national curriculum in Indonesia. Values should be cultivated through actions. However, most schools teach character education theoretically. Thus, this study describes the humanistic education that promotes character education through activities in one of the private elementary schools in Bali, Indonesia. Based on the objective of the study, this study can be classified into a case study. The researchers collected the data through observations and interviews. The collected data were then analyzed qualitatively using an interactive data analysis model. This study found that humanism education was conducted through seven programs that require the students to get involved physically and do actual actions. In other words, the school implemented humanistic education through the 'learning by doing' concept to cultivate students' characters. To give a vivid picture of the implementation of humanistic education at that school, those seven programs are discussed in this article using current theories and empirical studies.

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Introduction

Character education has become one of the most outstanding controversial domains globally (Waters & Russell, 2014). It is not a secret anymore that there is an indication of many violent and moral degradations in Indonesia affecting the Indonesian youth (Agung, 2018). Higher moral degradation impacts include rampant corruption, theft, murder, rape, and juvenile delinquency (Hidaya & Aisna, 2020). Agung (2018) emphasized that several symptoms appear: drug abuse, free sex, crime, violent act, and disrespectful behavior. This is also supported by (Muassomah et al., 2020), who claimed that Indonesian youth are also

involved in all kinds of criminal and illicit acts, namely, casual sex, narcotics, brawls, street racing, and gambling.

The impacts have also been found inside the school system. It has been found that students have become less polite to teachers, who should be respected (Mustoip, 2018). It is not only the politeness of the students, but the moral degradation, a step higher up the ladder. For example, in various regions, a national examination was colored by forms of fraud which involved not only the students but the teachers and school principals (Cahyo, Suyahmo, & Karyono, 2019). The Indonesian government noticed the moral degradation phenomenon, responding to it through moral and character education (Putri, Artini, & Wahyuni, 2020). Indonesian education is pushed to emphasize character education, which includes morality, religion, and nationalism, which is then expected to influence student learning (Kurniasih & Utari, 2018).

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Character education is the primary key to preventing moral degradation. It deals with the students' ability to decide how to behave based on appropriate manners or norms (Permana, Inderawati, & Vianty, 2018). Character education is related to the higher level of expression of love, integrity, compassion, and self-discipline (Jeynes, 2019). Honesty, compassion, loyalty, respect, trust, responsibility, and many other characters values must be taught, learned, and practiced by young children because such will guide them to act based on ethical values in the everyday social environment (Mei-Ju, Chen-Hsin, & Pin-Chen, 2014). High character values are essential to be owned by the students and teachers in their field knowledge, general knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge (Ülger, Yigittir, & Ercan, 2014). Besides, character education is also crucial in developing academic achievement and behavior of the students (Putri et al., 2020).

However, building morals and character is not an easy job. Building character needs time, patience, perseverance, and appropriate methods, techniques, and environment to support their development. Thus, character education needs to be developed from an early age (Suherman, Supriyadi, & Cukarso, 2019). More specifically, in preparing the youth to reflect the values of Indonesian people, the identity crisis faced by Indonesians needs much consideration, putting more effort into character education (Muassomah et al., 2020). Education in Indonesia must not emphasize test score and examinations only, it must also concern moral education that has roles in their personality growth (Annisa, 2018). To fulfil the orientation of Indonesian education, which creates a broad-minded generation, the education in Indonesia must implement character education, especially in Early Childhood Education to Elementary School (Lilawati, 2017). The central values of character education are religion, nationalism, independence, mutual integrity and cooperation, which are implied and expected to lead the Indonesian generation into a better life (Ananda, Anwar, Anifah, & Ray, 2019).

There are several studies investigating character education in the Indonesian context. Lilawati (2017) investigated the implementation of character education at an early age, especially in elementary school students, where it concerned how the students' behavior tended to be degrading in moral context. The study found that character values implementation is carried out by internalizing them into compulsory subjects through a learning process. Agung (2018) researched character education integration in social studies learning of junior high school students. Annisa (2018) conducted research to describe the implementation of disciplinary character education in elementary school with the principal, teachers and students as the subjects. Suherman et al. (2019) investigated action

research about strengthening national character education through physical education (PE) in Indonesia as the subject presented in the 2013 Curriculum. The result reflects the improvement in the teachers' pedagogical competence in developing five national characters through PE.

From previous studies, it was found that character education in the Indonesian context was commonly taught theoretically within the instructional process of certain subjects. Little is known about the implementation of character education at school that was conducted beyond classroom activities. Thus, this study aimed to describe the neo-humanistic education that promotes character education through actions beyond the classroom activities. This study provides an example of a more authentic implementation of character education that other schools may adopt as an alternative way to build students' character.

Literature Review

Neo-Humanism Education

Sarkar (1987) stated that neo-humanistic education is a new and stimulating experience at the boundary of the learning process that places students' spiritual world view. The application of neo-humanistic education provides a clear understanding of physical development, intelligence, emotions, imagination, intuition and spirituality. Neo-humanistic education seeks to advance the growth of moral values (inner strength, character) and students' intelligence. At the same time, it also aims to increase students' interconnection with one another to increase the perfection of life. Students' lives and livelihoods are aligned in terms of morals and the mindset of students. They are developed and interconnected to avoid negative things that can affect students' behavior, attitudes and thoughts. Furthermore, Sarkar (1987) emphasizes humanism education more on combining physical, mental and spiritual aspects. Humanism helps students develop and recognize themselves as unique persons and helps realize all the potential in students, including emotions, feelings, open communication and values.

Character Education

Lickona, Schaps, and Lewis (2007) argued that value/moral education that produces character contains three components of good character: moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action. Action (moral action) includes encouragement to do good, competence, desire, habit. Feelings (moral feeling) include conscience, self-confidence, empathy, love of kindness, self-control and humility.

Presidential Decree 87 of 2017 Concerning Strengthening Character Education (Widodo, 2017) defines character as distinctive values (knowing the value of goodness, wanting to do good, having a perfect life, and having a good impact on the environment) embedded in oneself and are manifested in behavior. Character education is defined as education that develops character values in students. They have values and character as their character, applying these values in their own lives as members of society and are religious, nationalist, productive, and creative (Curriculum Center, 2010).

Methodology

This research can be categorized as a case study. As explained by Creswell (2009), the purpose of a case study is to explore a process of cases to be investigated. When viewed specifically, this research is categorized as an instrumental case study, which is a case study conducted not only to explore the case under study, but more than that, it also sees a larger purpose (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun 2012). This study explored the application of the neo-humanistic approach to finding out the methods used by schools to shape student character.

This study was conducted at Bali Public School (BPS) Elementary School for three months from July to October 2019. The data in this study were collected through observation and interviews. The observation was carried out using non-participatory observation techniques, with the observed subjects being the teachers and students in BPS elementary school. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted using structured interview techniques by making all teachers the respondents, so it can be said that the respondents in this study were selected using a saturated sample technique. Since all teachers became the respondents, there were no specific criteria to select the respondents. Then, the data obtained through observation and interviews were then analyzed qualitatively using interactive data analysis models from Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), that consisted of three stages, data reduction, display data, conclusion drawing/verification.

Result

The humanist education program is contained in the hidden curriculum of BPS Elementary School, which is implemented every day through a sustainable school program. The programs are Morning Assembly, Five Principles of Morality, SGPC (Smile, Greet, Polite, Courteous), FAC (Forced, Accustomed, and Cultured), ILMF (I Love Mother's Food), CLE (Care and Love for the Environment),

and LSCO (Like to Save and Care for Others). The followings are the explanations of those programs.

The Implementation of Morning Assembly Program

Activities to welcome students in the morning are done before starting the learning process, followed by a prayer together followed by all students and the teacher council. The morning assembly is also filled with artistic creativity activities and skill shows to build social attitudes in character building. This aims to build students' self-confidence, hones their abilities, develops being responsible, becoming independent, working hard, being skilled, being innovative, always upholding a sense of self, and respecting each other. Every Tuesday and Thursday, after the activity of praying to hone their interest and talent in communicating skills, one of the students tells stories in English (storytelling), while on Wednesday the story is delivered using the Balinese regional language. This activity builds the students confidence and creativity. At the same time, Fridays are filled with special scout activities while still carrying out the morning assembly program. These scout activities train them to become independent, responsible and respect each other.

For students who arrive late at school, the picket teacher gives them a stamp, then the students write information in their diaries related to the delay. The positive impact of the Morning Assembly program is the enthusiasm of children to come to school early; this is evident from the data in the books of students who are late experiencing a decline from the beginning of the first day of school. Thus, if seen from the concept of neo humanism, this activity will develop their emotions, intuition, and spirituality.

The Implementation of Five Principles of Morality Program

Five Principles of Morality is one of the principles of neo humanism education, which is the embodiment of the teachings of *Panca Yama Brata* in Hindu religious education. The daily habits at school in behaviour are described in the Five Principles of Morality program. The values include: No Harming (don't hurt anyone), not hurting or injuring others, whether through arbitrary thoughts or words. Speak The Truth (don't tell a lie), honesty is an important part of the character of every student. All students are given an understanding of the importance of honesty. and giving appreciation to those who dare to be honest is also done by teachers to students.

No Stealing or don't take anything without permission. This value is an integral part of the concept of neo-humanism education. An example of this program is always permission or excuse when taking other people's belongings both at school and home. Universal Love (love everybody, love

everything), the implementation of the compassionate program is a form of caring for others and maintaining all existing private facilities and school facilities. Be humble or don't be greedy is a simple life concept. An example of the implementation is a birthday celebration for students and teachers to better interpret their togetherness and without differentiating their position and social status.

The Implementation of Smile, Greet, Polite, Courteous Program (SGPC)

The SGPC program is carried out routinely every day. Supervision is carried out jointly by the teacher council. This program teaches the students to smile to everyone. They are accustomed to always smiling when meeting anyone, either at school or at home or in other public places. Greetings using “*Namaskar Om Swastyastu*” is an obligation of all students and the teacher council and staff in the BPS Elementary School as is asking about condition or not forgetting to ask about family, teachers and friends' condition. This concept requires the teacher to first asks for news or about the condition of the students, then the students have to answer. Likewise, when starting lessons, for example, the teacher must ask, How are you...? How do you feel...? Are you ready to study? and other questions.

The students have to be polite. This is related to behaviour, speech, dress, and so on. Being polite to teachers at school and both parents at home means having behaviour that reflects kindness and friendliness to others. It also deals with the politeness in speech and courteousness in deeds in students' daily lives to be appreciated and respected by others, which leads to feeling comfortable. A concrete form of implementing this program can be seen in the morning when students enter the lobby. Teachers line up to welcome students by giving smiles, greetings and courtesy to students and parents of students who accompany them to school.

The Implementation of Forced, Accustomed, and Cultured (FAC) Program

The FAC program is integrated between one program and another, carried out routinely every day with the main foundation of neo-humanism. The FAC program is forced (doing good things every day), accustomed (maintaining cleanliness), and culturing (making good habits). Forced is a behavioural revolutionary program that changes students from previously being undisciplined to being disciplined. An example of its application is that students have to come in the morning, wake up early, already be wearing their uniform, study and write, and various other activities. Accustomed deals with maintaining cleanliness. This covers accustomed to maintaining cleanliness of not only themselves but the

place of study and the environment. Cultivate or make good habits covers culture of good behaviour or attitudes of students, such as guiding in greetings, dress neatly, female students to tie their hair, good eating and polite ways of speaking. The values that can be listened to from the FAC program are religious, discipline and tolerance.

The Implementation of I Love My Mother's Food (ILMF) Program

The ILMF Program in a healthy lifestyle supports a healthy physical, mental and spiritual life. The ILMF program has the following objectives: always grateful, always loving, always devoted, always developing. The ILMF program is carried out routinely every day. As for the procedure for its implementation, each student is required to bring food from home, homeroom teachers and teachers who teach at the 4th hour (first break) must accompany students to eat together in class, pray together as thanks for the blessings and gifts of God and thanks to the mother who has prepared all her child's needs.

The results of the interview with Ms. Widya, as a Hindu religion teacher, stated that the ILMF program is a form of gratitude. This program follows the Five Principles of Morality program in the part of simplicity, which in Hinduism is called *Aharalagawa*, namely, living in simplicity, not greedy for food. This means eating healthy, balanced nutrition. Eat on time, eat when you are hungry and stop before you are full or your stomach is too full. The ILMF program is an application of the teachings of Humanism education, namely, how to ensure a healthy physique by eating healthy foods. The ILMF program implies forming the character of being grateful, religious, responsible, disciplined, and always having a sense of concern for sharing.

The Implementation of Loving to Save and Caring for Others (LSCO) Program

The LSCO is a program to foster students' character, especially attitudes: frugal, caring, namely fostering an attitude of sympathy and empathy for others who are less fortunate, by participating in assisting according to ability. The LSCO is a program that embodies the teachings of *Tat Tvam Asi* and the teachings of *Tri Parartha*, which is to foster a sense of sharing, compassion, care, and empathy. Caring is carried out by reducing the burdens and suffering of others. It was seen that student representatives, teachers, and the committee (parents of students) were handing over assistance to victims of landslide natural disasters in Kintamani - Bangli and victims of Mount Agung eruption at the Tanah Ampo Disaster Care Post, Karangasem, Bali. This proves that the Gempes program was implemented

not only for personal interest in schools but also for concern for fellow human beings, as a form of the application of humanism education.

The Implementation of Care and Love for the Environment (CLE) Program

The CLE program is a program of care and love for the environment. Train responsibility, namely, instilling an attitude of responsibility in maintaining environmental cleanliness (keep clean), Loving, which is to raise awareness of students to care for and preserve the environment both at school, at home, and the environment where they live (go green), and keep the environment clean by disposing of rubbish in place and strive for 3 R (reduce, recycle, reuse).

The development of a humanism education pattern shapes character in BPS Elementary School through integrated school programs. It is carried out in the learning process and outside of school and in their homes. This is supported by curriculum implementers (school principals and teachers), facilities and infrastructure, management and financing factors. A school can manifest itself as a place for implementing the educational process, the socialization process and the value transformation process for its students (affective, cognitive, and psychomotor) simultaneously and intact. Thus, learning becomes fun and exciting for students, making school a second home for them. Based on the results of observations and interviews, facts about the implications of implementing school programs at SD BPS were found.

Discussion

Based on the research results described above, it can be seen that character education in Public School elementary schools is included in the hidden curriculum and emphasizes activities. This finding is different from the implementation in schools in general, which emphasizes the integration of character education in learning material in each subject. The use of a hidden curriculum can make students understand character values unconsciously through the activities carried out (Eliasa, 2014; Gunawan, Eri Kusumaningrum, Triwiyanto, Zulkarnain, & Nurabadi, 2018). This is very important in character building because character should indeed be shown by action, not only in the form of theory (Çubukçu, 2012).

From the programs implemented in BPS elementary schools, it can be seen that character education is carried out with habituation. When viewed further, habituation is an effective strategy in character building (Cahyo et al., 2019). This is because the character is formed from culture,

and culture is formed from habits (Heyes, 2020). If you want to instil a character of discipline, then discipline must be familiarized to become a culture. In other words, character education is training to be applied in everyday life (Hill, 2018). Judging from the programs implemented in BPS elementary schools, it can be seen that students are indeed trained to carry out activities that apply the character values that the school wants to familiarize and cultivate. In other words, the character values in BPS elementary schools can be said to be not just taught but trained.

In addition, the character values taught also include character values which are very important to be applied at home and to preserve the environment. For example, love your mother's cooking and the CLE Program. Besides, the school also inserts religious values in every activity. Thus, we can say that the implementation of the character education in BPS elementary school reflects the neo-humanistic concept that creates balance in physical development, intelligence, emotions, imagination, intuition and spirituality. Some studies also confirmed that humanistic concept brings positive effect on students' morality and can create a good character education atmosphere through real activities (Hartono, Haryanto & Asrowi, 2018; Muali, 2017). This makes the implementation of character education in BPS elementary school different from other schools.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that humanism education implemented at BPS Elementary School focuses on actual activities through some prepared programs. Each program has its character-building objectives. The school teaches the students by involving them in activities that can cultivate their characters. To make sure that the activities are effective, the school conducts the activities continuously. In other words, the school makes the students build their character by the "learning by doing" concept. Since this study was limited to describe the implementation of humanism education at BPS Elementary School, further research in the form of evaluative study is needed. An evaluative study that determines the problems in implementing the programs and the effectiveness will provide information about things that can be done to create a better program. That evaluative study must be carried out in the form of long-term research to see whether the habituation carried out has become a culture reflected in students' daily lives at school, at home and elsewhere.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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