

The Importance of Character Education to Address Moral Decadence among College Students

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Abstract

As a formal institution, universities play a central role in character education to mature students as future leaders with national insight. The rapid pace of technological and information development has a significant impact on human life, namely the existence of a "moral" crisis, especially in the student environment. Therefore, universities are obliged to align educational functions with humanizing students into whole human beings, namely becoming individuals who are excellent, have a broad perspective, have a clear heart and have high-quality character. So that when students enter society in the future, there will be no misuse of the knowledge they have learned during their university education. Universities as the gateway to higher education institutions need to reformulate educational steps and strategies that aim at the formation of student character to strengthen behavior in accordance with the mandate of the national philosophy and national education system.

Keywords : *character education, collage, moral decadence*

Date of Submission: 10-01-2024

Date of Acceptance: 20-01-2024

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology and information has a significant impact on human life, including students. Ironically, as agents of change, students are expected to be able to balance the rapid development of technology and information with the knowledge they have acquired both inside and outside the campus. However, the rapid development of technology and information has had a negative impact on student life. This has led to the decline of moral values among students in the 21st century. Some of the moral declines that are common among students today include drug abuse, promiscuity, cheating, and plagiarism. Students, who are often seen as educated people, agents of social change, and other noble attributes, are actually the ones who consume the most drugs, engage in sex outside of marriage, or cohabit. In addition, cheating and plagiarism (copying other people's writing) are not new to students. The presence of technology has actually made it very easy for students to commit these immoral acts. (Epifan Solanta,2015). Higher education is considered the final gate of formal education. However, it turns out that big-time corruptors and political thugs are actually born from people with a high education background. This is due to the confusion in viewing, understanding the essence or meaning, and the true role of education. The indication is more evident when the practice of corruption, collusion, and nepotism is actually carried out by the educated people who were born from higher education. This is what triggers the moral decline in our country.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indonesian society still sees education as a "stepping stone" to improve social stratification through academic titles alone. If someone's education is high, their social status is guaranteed to rise. Therefore, Indonesian society still sees education as a means, not as the primary and first goal of forming a superior and character-building person (Mochtar Buchori; 1994). If education is only seen as a stepping stone of formality, there is a possibility of being trapped in a culture of formality and "instantness" of titles alone, which is

increasingly large with academic trappings that are considered competent, mastering knowledge or having life skills (live skill), certainly the image that is reflected if someone is superior and of high quality (Mu'arif, 2008). Being a student is a mandate, so students must have specific criteria that are commensurate with their functions as Agent of Change, Social of Control, and Moral Force. Especially in the midst of the rapid flow of globalization, soft skills become an important point that must be possessed by students as the future generation and truth tellers. Students are the most sensitive elements to respond to the problems of the nation and as a promoter of people power (moral force) that concerns the interests of the general public. Education needs to uphold human values in the process of educational transformation, namely the process of making humans think critically and the obligation to reveal a truth about everything that exists in the world, and to be critical of all forms of systems that negate the essence of Humanism that is far from bias. Students as agents of change are intended that in making a holistic and systematic change for the common good, students are required to have the capacity and capability for it. There are so many activities that can be carried out, from discussions, seminars to demonstrations that are critical-analytical to fight for the truth and uphold the welfare of the people.

Education that is based solely on the development of logic-intellectual without the development of spiritual and emotional values is a method of education that needs to be questioned. This is because high intelligence without being balanced with spiritual values and emotional balance will not produce the expected social intelligence. Many people are too greedy for material things, making them selfish, so they no longer care about commitment and often lose the meaning of what they are doing, and even lose a sense of solidarity to live in society. If universities do not pay attention to the quality of their students and lecturers, elites or authorities in universities do not pay enough attention and empowerment to improving students' intellectual and spiritual values, then students will experience social and moral inequality which will have an impact on riotous attitudes, consumptive and only fulfills personal satisfaction such as shopping, clubbing, drugs and also free sex. They are not yet aware of the main duties and functions as STUDENTS themselves. They become wild students who lack attention and empowerment from educational institutions. Character development in higher education is essentially the development of character for all members of the academic community through academic processes (tri dharma), learning, research, community service, student activities, the development of various core values through real-world activities, the physical environment (socio-psycho-cultural), and a work environment accompanied by roles, responsibilities, and ethics. In essence, all of these must be done internally and continuously, and cannot be done instantaneously. Character education must go through a process of practice, habituation, and modeling. Education clearly plays an important role in this. For example, in the military education system, the disciplined character of soldiers cannot be achieved in just one night of training. They struggle with it every moment. So it is only natural that in the end, discipline becomes part of the soldiers' identity.

According to T. Ramli (2003), character education has the same essence and meaning as moral education and religious education, which aims to shape the child's personality so that they become a good person, a good citizen, and a good citizen. Meanwhile, according to Tadkiroatun Musfiroh (UNY, 2008), character refers to a series of attitudes. In essence, character education aims to form people who are resilient, competitive, virtuous, moral, tolerant, cooperative, patriotic, dynamically developing, oriented to science and technology, all of which are imbued with faith and piety to God Almighty based on Pancasila, which should be the spirit of education in higher education to produce students who are excellent, have global vision, and have a clear heart with noble character. The functions of character education are as follows: (1) To develop the basic potential to be kind-hearted, think well, and behave well. (2) To strengthen and build the behavior of a multicultural nation. (3) To improve the civilization of a competitive nation in the world community. (Ana Irhandayaningsih, 2007). Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. also once said: "Intelligence plus character....that is the goal of true education." (Intelligence plus character....that is the ultimate goal of true education.)

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method in this article is a literature review using a systematic mapping study method. All articles used in this research were obtained from Science Direct, Eric, and Google Scholar with the keywords character education, moral decadence. The stages of the literature review are as follows: 1) The stage begins by searching on Science Direct and Eric with the keywords character education, moral decadence, 2) continues with narrowed keywords, namely building character. 3) Reducing the number of articles obtained is adjusted to the application of education to build character in Indonesia. 4) Make a Literature Review. When searching for articles, the principle of novelty is prioritized, so that most of the articles or books used are published in the last 10 years and are international journals. The study in this article focuses more on character education, moral decadence and character building.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Functions of Education in the Development and Formation of Character

Education is a conscious and systematic effort that is not only done to humanize humans, but also to make humans aware of their position as *khalifatullah fil ardh*, humans become responsible for life on earth, which in turn will improve themselves to become humans who are faithful, knowledgeable and righteous with a high degree. (Suryadi, 2007). Education is expected to preserve the values that are the foundation of life in society, nation, and state. The noble ideals of Indonesian independence will be realized if education is able to function to conserve the basic values and the 1945 Constitution and provide new enlightenment in actualizing these values in accordance with the development of the times. The main function of the education system is to teach children the essential behavioral patterns. (Redja Mudyaharjo, 1992:45)

The national education goals are set out in the National Education System Law, Article 1(1) of Law No. 20/2003 on the definition of education: Education is a conscious and planned effort to create an atmosphere of learning and learning processes so that students can actively develop their potential to have spiritual strength of religion, self-control, superior personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation and state. (Sukardjo, Ukim Komaruddin, 2010: 14). According to Dewey, the purpose of education is to develop the full potential of students so that they can function as members of society through active, scientific, and social educational and teaching activities based on real life that can develop the soul, knowledge, sense of responsibility, skills, will, and refinement of character. According to Aristotle, a good person is not just someone who has one virtue, but someone whose attitudes and behaviors are guided by virtue in all things. (Hersh et al., 2009) Therefore, virtue must be reflected in one's speech, actions, and behavior. Or, to borrow from the concept of Thomas Lickona (2004), it is the harmony between moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. A person can be said to have character if they have good thoughts, good feelings, and good behavior.

Character is defined as: 1). The psychological, moral, or ethical qualities that distinguish one person from another (Daryanto, 1997: 327). According to the Directorate General of Elementary, Secondary, and Madrasah Education (Ditjen Mandikdasmen) of the Ministry of Education and Culture, character is the way of thinking and behaving that is characteristic of each individual to live and work together, both within the family, community, nation, and state. An individual with good character is an individual who can make decisions and is prepared to take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. Kamisa (1997: 281) defines character as "the psychological, moral, or ethical qualities that distinguish one person from another, temperament, nature. To have character means to have a character, to have a personality."

Wyne expresses that the word "character" comes from the Greek word "karasso" which means "to mark or carve," which focuses on how to apply the values of goodness in the form of actions or behaviors. Therefore, someone who behaves dishonestly, cruelly, or greedily is said to be a person with bad character, while someone who behaves honestly and helpfully is said to be a person with noble character. Therefore, the term character is closely related to a person's personality.

Alwisol explains the definition of character as "the portrayal of behavior by emphasizing values (right-wrong, good-bad) both explicitly and implicitly. Character differs from personality because the definition of personality is free from values. However, both personality (and character) are manifested in behavior directed to the social environment, both are relatively permanent and guide, direct, and organize individual activities."

The development of character is a very important factor in the social and personal development of an individual. The development of norms and morality is closely related to conscience. Conscience, according to learning theory (Monks et al., 1998), is a system of norms that have been internalized (become personal property) so that a person will continue to follow the norms even in the absence of external control (Rita Eka Izzaty et al., 2008).

The functions of character education are as follows: 1. To develop the basic potential to be kind-hearted, think well, and behave well. 2. To strengthen and build a multicultural national behavior. 3. To improve the nation's civilization that is competitive in the global community.

The character education package is a framework for the action plan that is based on the overall goal of education. It consists of the following: 1. Basic research on the profile of Indonesian people in the future. 2. Curriculum revision. 3. Revision of learning quality management. 4. Revision of guidance and counseling services. 5. Revision of the evaluation system. 6. Revision of teacher/lecturer human resource management. 7. Strengthening of institutional capacity.

The Nature of Higher Education in the Formation of Student Character

Higher education is a community or society in itself, called an academic community. The link between the campus as a society and at the same time an institution causes the campus to also have a distinctive atmosphere, namely the academic atmosphere. Ancient Greek and Roman societies did not know universities in the sense that we have used for the past 700 years. They did have institutes of higher education, but the

terminology was not synonymous with universities as educational institutions today, both in law, rhetoric, and philosophy. In the Greek era, although of high caliber, it was not structured in a permanent institution. Socrates never gave a diploma, but his students who came from all over the classical world knelt before him and held dialogues. If Socrates was satisfied with the results of the dialogue, then the seeker of knowledge was trusted to be independent and establish a center of education with new thoughts. Legitimacy is not marked by a diploma, but emanates from the authority, skills, and vision of renewal that grows in the mind of the seeker of knowledge. (Unesco, 1986). So the word "academic" is the key word, all phenomena and important problems that concern universities, all must be returned to the essence of universities as academic institutions, with academic societies, and with academic atmospheres. (Malik Fajar, Muhajir Efendi, 1998: 5-6).

The word "academic" actually comes from the Greek language, namely "academos," the name of a public park (plaza) in the northwest of Athens. The name was also taken from the name of a hero who was killed during the legendary Trojan War. It was in this plaza that Socrates gave speeches and opened debates on all things. It was also the place where Plato held dialogues and taught his philosophical thoughts to those who came. Over time, academic became a kind of "school," the followers of the school were called "academics," while such a school was called "academia." (Malik Fajar, Muhajir Efendi, 1998).

Institutions of higher education (universities) are the only social institutions that are specifically and organized to be responsible for developing students (university students) to have knowledge and skills not only related to truth, but also beauty and justice. In his book "Educating for character: How our school can teach respect and responsibility", Lickona (1991) reminds the importance of schools and teachers to place character as the main pillar of education, especially through the teaching of respect and responsibility. In general, the function of the educational environment is to help students (in this case, university students) to interact with various surrounding environments (physical, social, and cultural), especially various educational resources available, in order to achieve optimal educational goals. It is also important to state that the implementation of education is carried out through three activities, namely guidance, teaching, and/or training (paragraph 1 of article 1 of Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 2/1989), the main purpose of the three is;

1. Guidance, especially related to the maturation of identity and personality in terms of general behavior (cultural aspects).
2. Teaching, especially related to the mastery of knowledge.
3. Training, especially related to skills and soft skill proficiency as a provision for students to become quality individuals. (Umar Tirtarahardj, La Sulo, 2005: 165-166).

The role of higher education is not just to provide students with knowledge and skills. Universities also have a responsibility to help students develop their characters. The three missions of higher education are: 1) Teaching, 2) Research, and 3) Community Service. These missions are interrelated and equally important, and are known as the Tri Dharma of higher education. Universities must be active in research and scholarly activities. Students are expected to be familiar with academic culture, in the form of scientific forums and other academic activities. For students, it is very important to receive character education. This is to strengthen the moral and virtuous qualities of students. Because intelligence in the field of education is not enough without a strong moral and character foundation. This is to prevent the misuse of knowledge that students learn in college when they enter society. Therefore, the task of higher education is to align the function of education to humanize students into complete human beings. This means that students should become individuals who are excellent, have a broad perspective, have a clear heart, and have a high-quality character.

The Control of Emotions and Motivation in Students

According to the Indonesian Language Dictionary (KBBI), the definition of motivation is a drive that arises in a person consciously or unconsciously to take an action with a specific purpose. Meanwhile, in psychology, the definition of motivation is an effort that can cause a person or group of people to be motivated to do something because they want to achieve their desired goals or get satisfaction from their actions (Husnul Abdi, 2021) Motivation is a state of internal or external that causes, directs, and strengthens behavior. Motivation refers to the factors that strengthen behavior. These factors can come from within or outside of a person. In higher education, motivation is closely related to student behavior at the beginning of the learning process. Educators (teachers) can stimulate their students' motivation and can help students develop extrinsic learning motives into intrinsic motives (Dee Cecco, 1968: 180).

According to Monks, Knoers, and Siti Rahayu Haditomo (1982), motivation is a complex construct that can be defined as a state of readiness or willingness to engage in a certain behavior. Motivation is influenced by a variety of factors, including the individual's goals, beliefs, and expectations. (Monks; Knoers; Siti Rahayu Haditomo, 1982: 162-163). Monks et al. (1982) identified three key elements of motivation: activation, persistence, and intensity. Activation refers to the decision to initiate a behavior, persistence refers to the continued effort to achieve a goal, and intensity refers to the concentration and enthusiasm used to pursue a goal.

In addition to these three elements, motivation also involves two basic structures: the expectation of success and the fear of failure. Therefore, in every human behavior, there is a desire to achieve a pleasant expectation and a desire to avoid unpleasant failure.

To help develop a sense of achievement, educators need to provide students with opportunities to explore and manipulate their environment. This will help to foster the growth of motivation and self-esteem.

The theory of attribution, developed by Weiner (2000), suggests that students' beliefs about the causes of their academic success or failure can influence their emotions and motivation. For example, if a student attributes failure to a lack of ability, which is not observable and cannot be controlled, they may feel embarrassed and ashamed. (Weiner, 2000) This can lead to decreased effort and a decrease in performance. However, if a student attributes failure to a lack of effort, which is observable and can be controlled, they may feel guilty and motivated to improve their effort. This can lead to increased effort and improved performance.

Eliot (1999) suggests that students' goals or desires can also influence their learning behavior. (Eliot, 1999) Students who have specific and challenging goals are more likely to work hard and achieve their goals. Students who have goals that focus on performance, such as getting a high grade, are more likely to be motivated by the fear of failure. Students who have goals that are opposed to performance are more likely to avoid situations that require them to demonstrate their abilities.

The Concept of Learning Culture

The perspective of learning culture as a knowledge system implies that learning culture is "a pattern for human behavior that functions as a blueprint (or guideline) that is shared collectively" (Keesing & Keesing, 1971). As a guideline, learning culture is used to understand and interpret the environment and its experiences, which can create and encourage the individuals concerned to carry out various actions and action patterns in accordance with the framework of rules that have been outlined together.

Learning culture can be a tool for the process of human adaptation to their environment, both physical and social. The learning knowledge system is used for adaptation within the framework of meeting three basic needs of life, namely:

1. Basic natural requirements, which are biological needs such as the need for food, drink, maintaining stamina, making the human body organs function better;
2. Psychological requirements, namely fulfillment of the need for a feeling of calmness, far from feelings of fear, isolation, anxiety, and various other psychological needs;
3. Basic social requirements, namely the need to relate to others, be able to maintain relationships, be able to learn culture, be able to defend oneself from enemy attacks, etc. (Suparlan, 1980; Bennet, 1976: 172)

Bennett (1976) explains that adaptation is an effort to adjust in a dual sense, namely humans learn to adjust their lives to their environment; or conversely, humans learn to adapt the environment they face to their desires and goals. In reality, humans do not simply accept the environment as it is, but learn to deal with the various problems that exist in their environment. Therefore, in a social environment, there are various forms of individual or group learning actions that are fundamentally driven by their adaptive attitude. The effort of humans to learn to adjust to their environment is always related to social, psychological, economic, and also physical institutions (Montagu, 1969; Smith, 1982: 85-89).

In the context of higher education, learning culture can be seen as a strategy for student adaptation. It is a set of learning models that includes a series of rules, instructions, recipes, plans, and strategies offered and implemented by universities as the gateway to the highest level of education. These recipes contain learning knowledge that can be used to identify goals and methods to achieve them. In addition, learning knowledge can also be used to identify various threats and to reconstruct the sources of threats and how to learn to overcome them.

The concept of learning culture is always faced with the reality of human life that is dynamic and constantly changing. Therefore, the concept of learning culture is interpreted not as static learning habits, but as dynamic and flexible learning knowledge in facing various ongoing changes. Learning culture is created and maintained by the community (students) as a means to maintain its existence as an academic community and to create a reading habit. Similarly, learning culture will develop to develop the existence of life and to promote the quality of student character or morality. This is what should be the spirit of the orientation of higher education/campus.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Philosophically, the Father of National Education, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, stated that education is an effort to promote the growth of moral character (inner strength and character), mind, and body of children. These parts must not be separated so that we can promote the perfection of our children's lives. The essence, function, and purpose of national education imply that through education, it is intended to realize students who

have a variety of intelligences in an integrated manner, both spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual, and kinesthetic intelligence. Therefore, national education has a noble mission for individual students (Dasim Budimansyah, et al. 2010).

One of its noble missions is to enlighten the life of the nation, Character education which was initiated by the government to build the nation's civilization, needs to be made as a major agenda by involving all stakeholders of education to implement it properly and correctly into our educational world.

The configuration of character is in accordance with the concept proposed by Imam Al-Ghazali; the heart is like a king who determines what must be done, the mind is like a prime minister who thinks about how to implement the work, and the hands are like employees who are responsible for carrying it out.

As the movement of character education began to be launched since 2009 by the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, the spirit of implementing this idea began to take root at all levels of education. Character education can be interpreted as values that are embodied in real-life behavior on a daily basis that are sourced from religious norms, ethics, customs, culture, or laws and regulations. Character development has actually been a long-standing policy and has been intervened in education.

In this case, higher education has a central role in character education for the maturation of students (students) who are the last formal institution to produce future cadres who are insightful and have national character.

To achieve the dream of a university (Tri Dharma), the university continues to instill the spirit of "fastabiqul khairat" (strive for goodness and quality) education that remains based on the national education goals. Avoiding the causes of educational institution failure, Edward Sallis said that the general causes of educational quality failure can be caused by several sources that include weak curriculum design, unqualified buildings, poor work environment, inappropriate systems and procedures, haphazard work schedules, lack of resources, and inadequate staff development (Edward Sallis, 2010:103-104).

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