

Character Educations' Comparison in Japan and Indonesia to Achieve Quality Education Goals

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ABSTRACT: In the current era, the implementation of character education is crucial for any country. Japan and Indonesia are two nations that have educational goals centered around character building. However, the execution of character education in these two countries follows different concepts. Despite these differences, both countries share the same objective: to create a quality nation. This study employs a library research method, an activity that utilizes written sources as references to obtain information and data related to the discussed topic. These data and information sources are obtained from various literature, such as books, articles, magazines, and both printed and online websites relevant to the discussion. Japan is known for its strong character education, which is integrated into the school curriculum and extracurricular activities. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, character education is still in the developmental stage, with several new programs and initiatives being launched. However, it still needs to be fully integrated into the overall education system.

KEYWORDS: Character Education, Educational, Japan, Indonesia

A. INTRODUCTION

A nation requires a generation that is intelligent, disciplined, and of noble character to realize its aspirations. These goals can be achieved through education. Education plays a crucial role in human life as it can enhance the quality of life of a nation, build a dignified country, and produce an excellent generation. Education does not merely aim to humanize individuals but also helps them discover their potential by aligning with their talents and interests. It is not solely focused on knowledge but also the development of attitudes, behavior, and character, enabling individuals to navigate life with the knowledge and character they have acquired. Education is not oriented solely toward cognitive intelligence but also encompasses moral intelligence and character development (Yulianti, 2021, p. 29). Thus, the progress of a country is determined by the character of its future generations. If character education in a country is well-implemented, it will positively influence the nation's development and progress, and vice versa.

Article 3 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 states that the goal of national education is to develop and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation, aiming to educate the lives of the people. The objective of national education is to provide opportunities for learners to become religious citizens with noble character who are physically and mentally healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and responsible (Nurleli, 2020, p. 9)

Handayani and Indartono state that the purpose of character education is to shape good children. A child with good character is committed to doing their best and has clear life goals. Character education in the school environment plays a crucial role in developing students' potential and achieving significant objectives. Therefore, character education has a strategic role in shaping individuals with noble character (Handayani & Indartono, 2016, p. 508)

Introducing character education from an early age plays an important role in preparing generations to face the rapid development of technology. The main reason for implementing character education early on is to address various issues resulting from the increasingly complex impacts of globalization. Some of these issues include a lack of attention and concern for the surrounding environment, low self-esteem, and a lack of responsibility (Dirgantoro, 2016, pp. 3-4). Bung Karno said, "This nation must be built by prioritizing character formation." This statement highlights the importance of character education as the foundation of a nation, as character building makes Indonesia a great, advanced, glorious, and valuable country.

Developed countries strive to prepare for a global world that increasingly narrows cultural boundaries and distances between civilizations. Therefore, character education becomes a priority over other forms of education to enhance national flexibility. A strong, moral, and noble generation will lead the nation to greatness, while a weak generation lacking noble values and easily influenced by foreign cultures can become a threat. The moral crisis afflicting the country, marked by immorality, corruption, violence, and drug addiction, underscores the current importance of character education. (Rofi'ie, 2017, pp. 114-115)

In this article, the author attempts to compare the implementation of character education in two Asian countries, Japan and Indonesia. Although Japan and Indonesia have different cultures and societies, both focus on character education. The purpose of this article is to provide an understanding of how character education is implemented in both countries to achieve quality outcomes.

Overall, this research aims to analyze character education in Indonesia and Japan. Broadly, this research has two main objectives: to explore the concepts and issues of character education. This study will undoubtedly assist teachers or parents in guiding students or children, particularly in relation to character development.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study falls into the category of library research. The author utilizes the library research method in the research process. Library research is an activity that uses written sources as references to obtain information and data related to the discussed topic. These sources of data and information are obtained from various literature such as books, articles, magazines, and both printed and online websites relevant to the discussion. Furthermore, the author employs descriptive analysis techniques to read, interpret, and record all the collected data. Therefore, in simple terms, we can explain the comparison of character education in Japan and Indonesia in an effort to achieve quality educational goals.

C. DISCUSSION

1. The Concept of Character Education in Japan

The Japanese believe that people can change themselves and their character through their efforts or the efforts of others. They do not believe that humans are inherently bound to certain unchanging circumstances. In this view, education, including character education, is very important for Japanese people. In Japan, character education is taught through moral education called "doutoku" and is implemented at all levels of school, from elementary school to high school. This moral training builds the character of the Japanese people, who are known to be tenacious, hardworking, tenacious, honest, tolerant, and have a strong brotherhood. This moral education is integrated into the curriculum and becomes an integral part of other subjects. Morality or *doutoku-kyoiku* is divided into four aspects as follows:

- a. Regarding oneself, it includes wisdom, hard work, courage, sincerity, freedom, and order.
- b. Related to relationships with other people, includes courtesy, attention and kindness, friendship, thanks, and appreciation.
- c. Related to the relationship with nature includes respect for nature, respect for life, and aesthetic sensitivity.
- d. Related to relationships in groups and society, including honoring promises and carrying out obligations in society, justice (honest and impartial without discrimination, prejudice, and fairness), group participation and responsibility, hard work (understanding the meaning of hard work and the desire to work, giving a contribution to society, respect for traditions and love for the country (interested in the nation's culture and traditions, love the country), respect for other cultures (Mulyadi, 2014, pp. 71-72)

The educational curriculum in Japan consists of three categories, namely academic subjects (compulsory and optional), moral education, and special activities. In Japan, moral education is not taught as a separate subject but is integrated into all subjects, with the homeroom teacher directly responsible. Moral education in Japan is often taught through *seikatsu* or life skills lessons, which are related to everyday life. For example, elementary school students are taught how to cross the road correctly, etiquette on the train, and other practical things. Apart from that, the teacher not only provides theoretical explanations but also invites students to practice directly. The homeroom teacher also often conveys cases of violations and invites students to discuss them to find solutions.

In Japan, elementary school education aims to instill independence and aesthetic values as well as moral and personality education that is practiced in everyday life, not just theory about lessons. More students walk to or use bicycles to school. Apart from that, students use transportation or public transportation such as school buses to go to school. Students are not used to being picked up by their parents. Instead, they go to school with their friends. (Mulyadi, 2014, pp. 71-72)

The character education method in Japan adopts a learning-by-doing approach. Students are often invited to eat lunch together, work together with friends, say hello, do motor activities, and perform in front of the class. This approach is not only applied in schools but also the daily lives of Japanese society. Throughout Japanese cities, there are posters urging citizens to behave politely. In addition, on public transportation, there are warnings and invitations to obey the rules, including prohibitions on telephone calls, loud talking, and disruptive behavior. The Japanese government also built free traffic parks in every city to teach children how to manage traffic on the roads, with officers serving as masters to guide and reprimand them if they make mistakes. The character education method in Japan adopts a learning-by-doing approach. Students are often invited to eat lunch together, work together with friends, say hello, do motor activities, and perform in front of the class. This approach is not only applied in schools but also the daily lives of Japanese society. Throughout Japanese cities, there are posters urging citizens to behave politely. In addition, on public transportation, there are warnings and invitations to obey the rules, including prohibitions on telephone calls, loud talking, and disruptive behavior. The Japanese government also built free traffic parks in every city to teach children how to manage traffic on the roads, with officers serving as masters to guide and reprimand them if they make mistakes. (Ramli, 2018, pp. 60-61).

In Japan, the role of family is very important in shaping children's character. Parents teach the values of courtesy, discipline, and order from an early age. For example, when children are going to eat, they are taught to sit neatly and say "*itadakimasu*" before eating and "*gochisosama deshita*" after eating. Children are also taught not to waste food on their plates and to wash their plates and glasses. All of this aims to ensure that children can live independently and responsibly (Raup, 2022, p. 3751).

Parents provide family education to prepare and accompany their children to enter school. One way Japanese parents teach their children is by giving them advice and treating them the way they want. Every treatment a child carries out will always have an impact on other people. Therefore, children will get used to prioritizing the interests and feelings of other people over their interests (Widiuseno, 2018, pp. 60-61).

In Japan, parents teach discipline to children from an early age. They teach children to put things in their place, as well as set times for eating dinner, sleeping, watching TV, and playing. If children break the rules, parents give warnings or small punishments. Additional etiquette taught in Japanese families includes saying hello when leaving the house and returning, saying thank you for help, apologizing for mistakes, and correcting mistakes. (Mulyadi, 2014, pp. 75-76).

Character Educations' Comparison in Japan and Indonesia to Achieve Quality Education Goals

Therefore, the implementation and methods of character education in Japan are not only applied in schools but are also applied within the family, community and government. The roles of various parties are very important for character formation to be carried out optimally.

2. The Concept of Character Education in Indonesia

Character education will be the basis for building high-quality national character, which recognizes social principles such as tolerance, togetherness, and cooperation, as well as mutual respect, mutual assistance, and so on. Those who are educated with character education will become extraordinary individuals who have extraordinary cognitive abilities and character that allow them to succeed.

To build a competitive and independent future society, character education must collaborate with many things. Religious values, culture, and a person's potential are the factors that cause the first synergy. Second, education provides knowledge. Third, efforts must be made to develop, change, and improve using the principles of hard work, quality development, honesty, effectiveness, and democracy.

Several values form (integrity) a complete character, such as being creative, respecting, having faith, having a scientific basis, synthesizing, and acting according to ethics. The first character education is embedded in parenting patterns in the family, the second does not need to be studied at school, and the third is only after the first and second processes that character education can be formed in society and even government. (Narwanti, 2011, p. 70)

The introduction of character values in schools can be done through habituation and exemplary actions. Schools implement character education through daily habituation activities such as implementing 5S (smile, greet, greet, politeness, and good manners), shaking hands with teachers, increasing interest in reading, and creating a clean environment in the classroom. Habits are divided into routine and spontaneous. Routine activities include flag ceremonies, gymnastics, congregational prayers and maintaining cleanliness. These spontaneous actions include smiling, greeting, saying hello, taking out trash, resolving disputes, and reminding students of violations of school rules. All of this is expected to shape students' character and strengthen positive attitudes. (Sari, 2017, pp. 253-256)

Apart from that, developing character education through exemplary activities is the right choice. In character education, an example is key because the character is behavior that students can imitate in the school environment. The closer the teacher is to the students, the easier and more effective it is to set an example in character education. In several exemplary actions to instill character in schools, teachers and students pray together before and after lessons, greet students politely, respect students' opinions, and keep the school environment clean by throwing away and cleaning up rubbish. (Sari, 2017, p. 256)

Through this exemplary activity, students can develop positive character. So that this character can be internalized, students must be given a model or example and taught in a way that suits their conditions. Therefore, students need real-life examples rather than examples that only exist in textbooks.

3. Problems of Character Education in Japan and Indonesia

Japan and Indonesia have various problems in character education. There are several problems with character education in Japan, namely that there are many students who experience stress in academic learning, minimal student participation in social activities, and increasing cases of bullying by several groups. Apart from that, the demands of life in Japan are very high, resulting in increased stress, which disturbs a person's psychology. Psychological disorders affect the development of a person's personality and character. The next problem is that some parents still need to care more about forming their children's character. Parents are mostly busy outside the home or at the office, so they rarely control their children's character education. In Indonesia and Japan, both face the same problem. In urban areas, many parents hand over their children's education entirely to school. This condition certainly affects children's character education (Syamsurrijal, 2017, p. 74).

In Indonesia, there are also obstacles in forming character education. One of the obstacles is the educational curriculum which focuses more on mastering academic material rather than character development. Apart from that, one of the problems with character education in Indonesia today is that some teachers fail to plan varied and innovative lessons so that students feel bored. Therefore, the expected character education does not develop effectively. (Hendayani, 2019, p. 195)

In overcoming these problems, these two countries adopted several effective strategies. This strategy involves training teachers in character education, developing extracurricular programs that involve students in social activities, and involving parents and the community in the character education process.

D. CONCLUSION

The results of the research show that character education in Indonesia is through instilling values in the form of example and habituation. Meanwhile, in Japan, the approach that is more often used is habituation. The methods and implementation of character education in Indonesia and Japan are different. Therefore, Japan is famous for its strong character education, which is integrated into the school curriculum and extracurricular activities. In Indonesia, character education is still in the development stage, with a number of new programs and initiatives launched but not yet fully integrated into the overall education system. In Japan, what comes first are principles such as discipline, hard work and responsibility.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, principles such as tolerance, cooperation, and honesty are prioritized. Nevertheless, both countries agree that character education is very important to create a quality generation. The problem with character education in Japan is that in academic activities, some students experience stress, which disturbs them psychologically. In contrast, in Indonesia, the implementation of character education has not yet been fully developed because some teachers have not been able to implement the character education program well.

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