

## Strengthening the Value of Character Education to Improve the Quality of Education in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** The significance of moral education in enhancing the quality of education cannot be overlooked. Instilling values in students can help them build strong characters and enhance their moral compass. This qualitative research aims to explore the necessity of character education and educational values that can be implemented to enhance the quality of education in Indonesia. The research is derived from various scientific sources and employs literature as a means of gathering data. Indonesian students demonstrate a range of personal values through their efforts, including nationalism, tolerance, honesty, hard work, creativity, and effective communication, all of which form the moral basis of their actions. Hence, it can be inferred that moral values play a crucial role in improving the standard of education in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Character Value; Education Quality; Reinforcement

**How to Cite:** Anas, N. & Hartono, A. (2025). Strengthening the Value of Character Education to Improve the Quality of Education in Indonesia. *The 7th International Conference on Elementary Education*. 7(1). 602 – 612.

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### INTRODUCTION

The changes brought about by members of society have the power to influence society's lifestyles and attitudes in both positive and negative ways. To effectively prepare for and address the potential negative impacts of modern progress, it is crucial to promote character education at all levels of education, starting from early childhood and continuing through higher education (Cosanotto, 2017). According to Ariani et al. (2022), moral education involves instilling a fundamental set of values - such as honesty, hard work, respect, and humility - that are essential to an individual's way of life, and it is important to emphasize the enduring nature of these values. Bagenda (2018) argues that character education is not a new concept, subject, or curriculum, but rather a reinforcement and focal point of the educational process, serving as the foundation of education.

The digital revolution is reshaping fundamental aspects of life, culture, civilization, and society, including the realm of education (Choi, 2016; Dufva & Dufva, 2019; Giannini & Bowen, 2022; Sahin, 2018; Sterling et al., 2018). The global community is feeling the pressure of significant changes in human life, particularly as a result of globalization among nations, businesses, and individuals (Belal et al., 2015; Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2020; Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020; Dwyer, 2015; Rosenmann et al., 2016). The rapid pace of global change has led to the perception that the world is shrinking and time is speeding up. Furthermore, the emergence of the knowledge society, information society, and network society has elevated the importance of

knowledge, information, and networks as valuable assets. Nograha and Noorhasan (2021) note a growing emphasis on creativity and innovation as crucial resources for individuals, businesses, and society.

The Character Education Initiative seeks to elevate students' moral and personal growth in schools by fostering partnerships between schools, families, and communities, with an emphasis on emotional, aesthetic, intellectual, and physical development. This initiative is a key part of the National Intellectual Revolution (Afandi & Saadiyyah, 2020). Education's ultimate goal is to cultivate human beings, and this can only happen through a harmonious blend of spiritual, social, cognitive, and practical skill development. For a considerable time, the role of values education and character education has been a topic of discussion in Indonesian society, particularly within the education sphere. However, its implementation has been sidelined in favor of more tangible benefits, leading to a diminishing importance placed on character values. Consequently, other vital elements such as cognitive abilities, values and beliefs, communication, teamwork, patriotic spirit, and healthy lifestyle habits are being overlooked.

According to Eswatiniingsih (2019), promoting personal values is not just the job of teaching the younger generation, but it also requires cooperation and understanding between individuals and educational institutions. The success of character education in each educational environment depends on the connection between cultures in the classroom, school, family, and community. Eswatini (2019) provides a detailed explanation of these three educational settings. Instilling character values in education is crucial because it can help students become individuals with integrity, empathy, and a positive impact on society. Values like honesty, collaboration, and responsibility can help students develop their social, emotional, and academic skills.

For many years, character education has been an integral part of the national curriculum. In the 1960s, moral education was officially established as a school subject with the aim of imparting values to students. Under the New Order, character education was integrated into government initiatives, including the updating of the Guidelines for Cultivating and Implementing Pancasila (P4), which is mandatory for students at all levels of education. Currently, the school is implementing the 2013 curriculum, which is in line with each institution's graduation standards, improves the quality of education, and emphasizes the holistic and integrated development of students' character, with the goal of instilling moral values (Ciantury and Divi, 2021).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized qualitative methods to conduct a detailed analysis. Triangulation was used to confirm the data by comparing it with other sources. The analytical process involved four key stages: collecting data, analyzing data, presenting findings, and drawing conclusions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Thomas Lecuona emphasizes the integration of knowledge, emotions, and behavior in moral education as crucial for shaping a person's character. It is important to provide consistent character-based education to instill values in children, as this will help them develop emotional intelligence necessary for overcoming challenges and excelling academically in the future (Suanda & Nugroho, 2021).

The country of Indonesia must embrace the noble principles of Pancasila in order to prosper. It is crucial for the moral and ethical values found in Pancasila to become ingrained in the hearts and minds of every Indonesian, shaping their attitudes, thought processes, and actions, and serving as a compass for the nation. This is essential for Indonesia's development and growth.

Pancasila is not just a set of principles; it is the bedrock of our nation, a philosophy that leads us and a force that unites us. The five principles are the compass guiding all Indonesians in their national and societal endeavors. In the face of globalization, our nation's survival hinges on the preservation of Pancasila's values. It is imperative that we pass on these noble values to future generations, ensuring that they continue to illuminate and inspire the people of Indonesia for years to come.

The impact of globalization on the international order leads to significant changes in countries around the world. These changes affect every aspect of national life, from social and political to even psychological. The nation's belief in the Pancasila state serves as a stronghold in the face of these challenges brought on by globalization. It is crucial to instill the values of Pancasila in students, especially during key moments such as Youth Pledge Day, Independence Day, Heroes' Day, and other national holidays, in order to prepare them for the era of globalization.

The students are dedicated to attaining remarkable accomplishments, putting in hard work and utilizing their abilities to enhance the reputation of their nation and country. They proudly support and use domestically made products, wholeheartedly contributing to the growth of the country's economy. Unfortunately, numerous young people and students have been led astray

by corrupting influences, such as the negative effects of globalization, peer pressure, advanced electronic media, drugs, and alcohol. This worrisome situation demands special focus, as these individuals represent the future of Indonesia and will carry on the legacy of previous generations in nation-building.

The cultivation of national identity is a core element of our collective, national, and state existence. As such, it is essential that the nurturing of education and the nation's moral fiber be enshrined in our constitution. The bedrock of this endeavor lies in Pancasila and the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, and is further manifested in the National Long-Term Development Plan for 2005-2025. In 2007, it was underscored that the primary objective of national progress is to foster a resilient, competitive, and morally upright national character rooted in Pancasila, reflecting the diverse nature and conduct of the Indonesian people and society. This character is one that is faithful and devoted to the Almighty God, noble, tolerant, cooperative, patriotic, dynamic, and driven by scientific and technological pursuits.

In the quest to instill strong morals and ethics in the next generation during this age of globalization, it is crucial for us to push for the integration of Pancasila principles in our educational institutions. By doing so, we can ensure that the future generations of our nation continue to grasp and uphold these noble values, which will always serve as the guiding light for Indonesia. Character is shaped by our actions, and it is widely believed that it comprises three interconnected elements: moral understanding, moral emotions, and moral conduct. A solid character is built on a solid foundation of knowledge, a yearning for goodness, and the consistent practice of positive habits in our thoughts, behaviors, and actions.

Character education is a term that refers to a system of education that seeks to impart specific character values to students. These values encompass not only knowledge and awareness, but also the willingness and actions necessary to embody them. In essence, character education is a deliberate and organized endeavor to educate and empower learners to cultivate their own personal character, enabling them to become individuals who are not only beneficial to themselves but also to their surroundings. The process of character education is a continuous, lifelong journey, involving the imparting of noble values, good morals, and honorable character traits that are deeply rooted in religious teachings, cultural customs, and Indonesian values. The ultimate goal is to develop students into dignified individuals and citizens with strong character, in alignment with the noble ideals of the nation and its religious teachings. Therefore, it is crucial for students to receive character education that will help shape their positive characters. Overall, character education is centered on the idea of instilling values and behaviors that will contribute to the moral and ethical development of individuals, ultimately enabling them to be positive contributors to society.

The primary objective of character education is to empower students to apply knowledge in their lives, as well as to critically analyze, embrace, and internalize values. This includes the development of social skills and the cultivation of a noble character that they can demonstrate in their everyday interactions within diverse social and cultural environments. Ultimately, the goal of character education is to equip students with the means to utilize their knowledge, evaluate, internalize, and personalize values, and foster the social skills necessary for the cultivation of noble character, which they can then exhibit through their daily conduct. The concept of value is the result of the collective considerations of individuals or society in order to determine the importance or worth of something, idea, or practice. It is essentially the product of a careful assessment of the significance and worth of something. According to various opinions, value is considered an essential essence inherent in something that holds great meaning for human life. It is an abstract and ideal concept, not something concrete or factual, and goes beyond mere preferences or dislikes. Value is found within the relationship between the individual appraiser and the object being valued. These values, which underlie beliefs, exist in the spiritual, non-physical, and non-empirical world. Despite being intangible, they play a significant role in shaping a person's actions and appearance. Value essentially serves as a constant and eternal standard for behavior.

The main purpose of education is to mold the moral character of students, shaping them into individuals who are upright, noble, tolerant, resilient, and well-behaved. This is crucial for the cultivation of a thriving and harmonious society. The Ministry of National Education advocates for the endorsement of 18 core character education values, which encompass religious, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national pride, love for the homeland, appreciation for achievement, friendliness, peace-loving, love for reading, concern for the environment, and social responsibility. Based on the diverse viewpoints expressed, it can be inferred that essential values to be imparted include those that pertain to moral, virtuous, and religious principles.

According to the Dictionary of Sociology, value can be considered as the perceived ability of an object to meet the needs or desires of humans. In other words, value is not an inherent trait of the object itself, but rather a quality that is ascribed to it. This suggests that an object possesses value based on its characteristics or qualities. One example of a value is the state philosophy of Pancasila, which serves as the foundation for the country. Within Pancasila, the pillars represent different values, yet they ultimately form a unified system, highlighting the importance of unity despite differences.

We should maintain the belief in the Oneness of God. This belief holds the value that the creation of the state reflects the purpose of humanity as beings of God. Therefore, all aspects

of governing and administering the state, including laws, regulations, freedom, and human rights, should be based on the values of God. These values should be fair and civilized. As a result, the governance of the country, especially in the creation of state regulations, must ensure that the noble purpose of human dignity and rights, particularly human rights, is protected through legal regulations.

We urge you to lend your support to the unity of our beloved country, Indonesia. The first principle of our nation's ideology, Pancasila, underscores the significance of the state representing the dual nature of individuals and their existence within a societal framework. A nation is essentially a harmonious amalgamation of various components, such as tribes, races, social groups, and classes. Therefore, diversity is an intrinsic aspect of human nature, as well as a defining characteristic of the constituents that comprise a nation. Consequently, a nation is both diverse and unified, coalescing in the oneness epitomized by the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

The Citizens' Authority is guided by the principle of consultation and representation, reflecting the belief that the state is a reflection of the natural qualities of individuals and society. The people, as creations of a higher power, strive to uphold human dignity within their country. They are the foundation of the state, embodying its power and determining its direction. Upholding the principle of the people's sovereignty entails fully implementing democracy, including promoting freedom with responsibility, preserving the dignity of all individuals, and fostering unity and solidarity in society. This principle encapsulates the core democratic values that must be upheld in the nation's governance.

Social justice is a fundamental principle for all citizens of Indonesia. A country that places importance on justice and prosperity is one that exhibits the dedication and mindset to uphold these values, which are inherent traits of the Indonesian people. The embodiment of social justice can be seen in various ways, such as fostering a sense of community and collaboration, promoting fairness, upholding a balance between rights and responsibilities, and showing respect for the rights of others. These qualities reflect the character of social justice within the Indonesian society.

As is commonly acknowledged, humans are inherently reliant on the support and assistance of others. This understanding underscores the importance of cooperation in achieving any goal, as well as the responsibility of individuals to contribute positively to the well-being of others and the environment. Within the diverse and culturally vibrant society of Indonesia, the ability to exercise self-control and prioritize the welfare of others is not only essential but also greatly valued, as it contributes to the creation of a harmonious and equitable society. The

principles of Pancasila highlight the significance of maintaining balanced and harmonious relationships within the community, and emphasize the integration of these values into the fabric of society. It is therefore imperative for individuals to engage in collaborative efforts and coexist harmoniously with others in their social environment.

The description provided emphasizes the significance of Pancasila education in shaping the character of the nation's future generations. Education is widely recognized as a fundamental component of national development initiatives across the globe, with an emphasis on cultivating high-quality human resources as a crucial factor for a country's prosperity. The National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 outlines the objective of education as follows: "Education aims to develop the potential of learners to become faithful and pious individuals towards the One and Only God, have noble character, be healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens." This underscores the pivotal role of education in nurturing individuals who are not only academically proficient but also morally upright, physically fit, and actively engaged in democratic governance.

The above statements clearly express the importance of education in nurturing individuals who are capable of actively participating in the process of development. As development involves continual growth and change, it is essential for individuals to possess a developmental spirit in order to effectively contribute to the nation's overall development. This encompasses various aspects such as material, spiritual, and socio-cultural growth. Therefore, education plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals who can positively impact the development of their nation in diverse and holistic ways.

In addition to being part of the civic education curriculum, the principles of Pancasila are now being integrated into all other subjects as well, as per the 2013 revised curriculum. This integration involves the incorporation of character values into every classroom activity. Not only that, but the character values to be emphasized in each learning activity must be outlined in the lesson plan beforehand. These character values are chosen based on the fundamental skills that the students are expected to gain from each lesson. Furthermore, these character values are also used as a basis for discussing current issues from the perspective of Pancasila. This approach enables students to observe, analyze, react to, and address issues or phenomena in their environment in line with the character values of Pancasila. By permeating Pancasila values throughout the curriculum, the objective is to cultivate students who not only comprehend but also embody these national values in their day-to-day lives.

The enhancement of character education holds a crucial role in the comprehensive development of students in the contemporary age. In the midst of the widespread prevalence

of digital technology, the infusion of moral principles, ethical conduct, and individuality becomes increasingly vital in the educational sphere. Character education not only fosters individuals who are intellectually astute, but also those who embody integrity, empathy, and sincerity. In addition to this, digital literacy, defined as the capability to navigate, assess, and engage in the digital realm, assumes significance as a supplementary tool in fortifying students' character. Primarily, the reinforcement of character education within digital literacy-centered learning presents an avenue for students to cultivate proficiencies such as critical thinking, cooperation, and communication, all of which are indispensable in the current age of information. Through digital literacy, they can hone their ability to discern information, comprehend content at a deeper level, and cultivate analytical thinking abilities. Furthermore, digital literacy equips students with the awareness of the implications of technology usage on themselves and their surroundings, instilling an understanding of digital ethics and responsibility in online interactions. This serves to bolster moral consciousness and foster accountable character in the utilization of technology.

The incorporation of character education into digital literacy is instrumental in cultivating students who are highly adaptable to the continual technological advancements. By emphasizing values such as perseverance, cooperation, and resilience, students develop the ability to confront the digital world's challenges with increased preparedness and confidence. They evolve into individuals who can swiftly adjust, learn from their mistakes, and persistently advance despite the changes surrounding them. The critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation skills acquired through character education are directly applicable in the realm of digital literacy, fortifying students' character development as they confront the rapidly evolving technology landscape. Moreover, the fusion of character education and digital literacy equips students with the capacity to comprehend and navigate the plethora of information encountered in the digital sphere. In an age where information can be swiftly disseminated and misinterpreted, the ability to discern, assess, and responsibly utilize information becomes an indispensable skill.

A robust character education, coupled with digital literacy, plays a crucial role in shaping learners into discerning, critical, and insightful individuals when navigating the vast expanse of information available online. It equips them not only to accept information with a critical eye, but also to question, corroborate, and act upon their findings. Moreover, the integration of character education into digital literacy fosters empathy and tolerance, empowering learners to appreciate diverse perspectives and experiences encountered in the virtual realm. This in turn enables them to cultivate a deeper sense of empathy, hone their communication skills, and broaden their intellectual horizons. In doing so, they not only foster healthier interpersonal



relationships, but also bolster their character in terms of embracing diversity, inclusivity, and respecting differences. Therefore, digital literacy serves as a conduit for exploring and comprehending the world at large, while character education lays a firm moral foundation for navigating the complexities of the digital landscape. In view of the foregoing, it is imperative to delve further into this discussion through a content analysis approach.

Personal education involves guiding children through a series of educational and guidance programs that are aimed at instilling essential values in them. It enables students to understand, embody, and build upon the principles taught in their education, leading to the development of individuals with strong core values. It is important for educators to understand the importance of character development education by incorporating behavior, ethics, and personal values into the process of personal growth. This includes providing role models and creating a supportive environment that promotes advancement in all aspects of personal development.

Students are expected to adhere to fundamental educational principles, one of which is a deep love and appreciation for their own country. In order to fulfill their national service obligations, students must demonstrate attitudes and behaviors that reflect a strong sense of pride, unwavering loyalty, genuine compassion, and a profound understanding and respect for the language, culture, economy, and politics of their homeland. This deep attachment requires us to carefully consider any propositions from other nations that may potentially undermine our own national interests. Tolerance, on the other hand, involves maintaining attitudes and taking actions that show understanding and respect for differences in religion, beliefs, culture, language, race, and other aspects that may diverge from one's own, as well as the ability to peacefully coexist with these differences. Furthermore, embracing a religion requires following its teachings, including those of tolerance and harmonious coexistence with other faiths (Siyahputra, 2020).

Being creative requires individuals to constantly look for new and different ways to address issues and consistently strive for better answers. Independence involves individuals taking on challenges without always relying on others, while remaining open to collaboration without eschewing their own responsibilities. Nationalism means prioritizing the nation's interests over those of any particular individual or group. It also involves being communicative, approachable, and proactive in order to promote effective teamwork through respectful communication.

## **CONCLUSION**

Character education is a crucial component that should be integrated at every stage of the education system. It is imperative for educational institutions, including schools and households, to fully support and protect this initiative, from early childhood education up to tertiary level. Furthermore, it is essential for these efforts to collaborate with other organizations and work together towards the same goal, rather than operating independently.

It is essential to emphasize the importance of building character values within the education system, as it plays a vital role in cultivating a generation that possesses not only intelligence but also integrity and accountability. Introducing a variety of approaches within the school environment, coupled with the involvement and backing of families, is believed to be instrumental in fostering the internalization of positive values by students, which they can then integrate into their everyday experiences. Active engagement in the learning process also serves to facilitate the development of character values like creativity, originality, and teamwork amongst students.

Teachers play a crucial role in not only delivering academic material, but also in emphasizing the practical implications of the learning goals in everyday life. It is through their guidance that students' characters are shaped, with the ultimate aim of nurturing responsible and upstanding citizens who contribute positively to both their communities and the nation as a whole. As a result, it is expected that students will embody the values of Pancasila, ultimately leading to the creation of a generation of Indonesians who are not only intellectually competent, but also morally upright.

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