

EDUCATION AND NATION CHARACTER BUILDING ¹

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One of the most current critical issues in Indonesia is the permissiveness trend of society amid the rapid acceleration of social changes. There are a lot of examples illustrating permissive attitudes, such as porn movies among celebrities, drug abuse and social as well as domestic violence.

The Indonesian national character may be defined as view, attitude and behavior which promote the spirit of nationalism within the frame work of unity in diversity. Accordingly, those who have strong spirit of nationalism will be disturbed from any issues threatening their nation. When corruption scandals become hot news, for example, their soul will be in a quick response to eradicate corruption as much they can as possible. With such a character, they will be supportive towards any measures taken by law enforcement community to carry out proper legal execution for corruption cases.

It is beyond doubt that nationalism or national awareness can be embedded into the soul of our next generation through education. This is because education constitutes transformation process of knowledge, attitude and behavior relevant to any potentialities required for a nation. A great nation will, hence, depend on how far the people can elaborate and perform those potentialities for the sake of national interests.

Character is essentially susceptible to change. In this respect, education can alter the character of human life from being hate to love, from cruel to generous, from lazy to diligent, from individualistic to socialistic, from irresponsible to responsible, from immoral to ethical, from dishonest to honest, and from the loser to the winner. In my opinion, character is neither totally given nor ascribed; it is achievable through a struggle and effort.

Education is one of the best ways to change and develop character. A successful education is therefore seen from how well it can produce out puts with attitude and behavior relevant to indicators of good character. In many occasions, I say frequently that people with good characters are those who have honesty, integrity, responsibility, commitment, consistency and cooperativeness.

The task of educators is, then, to transform those good characters into the attitude and behavior of the students. Consequently, there should be intensive elaboration and innovation of the best methods and models of education for character building. Most

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importantly, there should be a strong commitment to transform education from *verbalistic* into *actualistic*. In other words, education should be altered from being more intellectual preparation as such to become more behavioral oriented. This is one of the best ways for maintaining education in order to be more valuable for our nation character building. The good character of the future Indonesian people would absolutely depend on how well the current education has been carried out. Only if education were successful, the future Indonesia will be successful as well.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

In an occasion of delivering opening remarks for Rector and Vice Rector Meeting on National Student Enrollment held in Makassar, 14 February 2010, the Ministry of National Education, Prof. Dr. Ir. H. Muhammad Nuh, emphasized the significant task of lecturers and university leaders to carry out character education for young people, especially students. He said that character education is important amidst the various problems of morality in global era.

The investment in education cannot be felt immediately. We need time to see its impact. Suppose we invest now, the result will be felt in the next 10 -15 years. Let us take an example of the *Bidik Misi* Program (Education Scholarship for Outstanding Poor Students) with the total amount of 20.000 students. The impact of the program will be felt 10 year later when the students have finished their studies and started entering labor markets and performed achievement in their respective expertise.

Currently, education is still considered the most important part of human capital. It means that education constitutes the most important aspect for human resource development. That is why the developed countries always increase their budget for education based on the belief that education is a human investment that will benefit the country.

As human capital, education deserves special attention. In this regard, the government has made an effort towards that direction lately. For instance, the budget allocation for education is now mounting to 20% and has been used for education empowerment in every level and aspect. This is evidence that the government has been seriously paying attention to education. Now, the question is how we can spend the budget efficiently and effectively for community development, especially for young generation.

Having the budget been increased and the programs been planned, the next important question is how to prepare our next generation to become intelligent, competitive and virtuous. This question has actually been answered in the national education strategic planning, in which significant alignment is made regarding the vision of education. While the previous strategic planning stipulates that the vision of education is merely to

produce intelligent and competitive pupils, the current one alludes that the vision is to produce Indonesian people with comprehensive intelligence, competitive and virtuous.

The concept of comprehensive intelligence has a complex meaning. It includes not only intelligent quotient, but also emotional and spiritual quotients as well. When education only produces intellectual intelligence, the target will be the intelligence of human brain only. If this is the case, people might be smart, but they would most probably be weak in terms of emotional and spiritual intelligence. Therefore, it is only through those three intelligences that the students are expected to become more comprehensive individuals in the future.

NATION CHARACTER BUILDING

Indonesia as a nation has essentially big capital to become modern nation with great national personality. Modern per se is not enough, because without personality a nation will go astray and be out of track. The rise of moral deviations, such as corruption, collusion and nepotism coupled with permissive attitude and irresponsibility has made the nation collapsed and bankrupt.

The nation is almost sunk because of chronic social diseases. The high corruption rates, the uncontrollable collusion, the spread of nepotism in every life dimensions as well as the permissive morality have made the county almost collapsed. This resulted in the low quality of human resource. We have never been in the rank below 100 according to the Human Development Index (HDI). The level of Indonesia in the Global Competitiveness Report is also low. Our rank lies on number 46 of the total 142 countries surveyed according to the Global Competitiveness Report, 2011 – 2012. Meanwhile, the county's poverty rates is still high, i.e. approximately 17.75% or equivalent with about 30 million population.

One of the factors resulting in this situation is the weakness of the nation spirit towards the very rapid changes, which tend to go to the wrong direction. Many people wanted to be rich, modern and wealthy, but through a wrong shortcut. Thus, their actions are at the expense of other people's suffering.

Corruption has made many development projects out of their grand designs. Budget mark-up that is not in line with social responsibility has made many development projects implemented below standard. This has resulted in many infrastructures getting damaged rapidly. Many public facilities that were planned for the prosperity of people do not function properly, even before the objectives of the projects have been reached. There have been many projects that are not well-planned and not in line with public needs.

Indonesia is a rich country with incomparable wealth of natural resources in the world. Our flora, fauna and marine bay are of abundant natural assets. Additionally, we have many islands, the width of sea and land areas which is almost equal to Europe, cultural, language and artistic properties. Interestingly, they are united in one nation, Indonesia, despite the diversity. This prosperity is undoubtedly a very valuable capital. However, it is still meaningless because of mismanagement and nation morality disorder.

Thus, character education is one of the solutions to cope with the abovementioned problems. In this context, Islam teaches us about ethical and moral improvement, and indeed the Prophet Muhammad was sent to do so. He said, "*Innama buistu liutammima makarimal akhlak.*"

In line with this, the prominent figure of Indonesian education, Ki Hadjar Dewantatra, stated that moral education is how to make an education enabling people to be public model when being in the front (*ing ngarsa sung tuladha*), to be motivator when being in the middle (*ing madya mangun karsa*), and to be supporter when being in the back (*tut wuri handayani*). This teaching is in line with the above saying of the Prophet Muhammad.

Character education is essentially an education based on honesty, sincerity, responsibility and trustworthiness; that is to be honest and sincere in every activity, to be responsible and trustworthy when being given a mandate. This kind of education is able to be carried out only on the grounds that it is supported by every level of national component. There should be environment, executor and policy that support that kind of education.

EDUCATION WITH CONSCIENCE

That education is not learning there is no discussion about that anymore. Learning is merely transformation of knowledge, while education has a wider meaning. The stressing in learning is more on intellectual aspect, while in education people will get not only intellectual, but also moral as well. Hence, an educator is not required only to teach pupils but also to educate them at the same time. This is why the Ministry of National Education and Culture has a motto derived from Ki Hajar Dewantara's concept of education, i.e. **Tut Wuri Handayani**. The complete concept is *ing ngarsa sung tuladha, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani*.

The philosophy of Dewantara's concept has a deep meaning for educators. An educator has to have good personality, so that he/she will become role model for his/her students. Al-Qur'an says: ***Lagad kana lamum fi rasulillahi uswatun hasanah.***

(Surely, there is role model in Prophet's personality). Therefore, Muslim scholars, teachers and lecturers are heirs of the Prophet, and hence ought to be role model.

A teacher has to be a motivator for their students in order to be successful. He/she shall be proud of their student's achievements. Accordingly, teacher or lecturer is not merely a transformer of knowledge, but also a motivator to his/her students. Furthermore, a teacher is also a counselor, the task of which is to show the way to a correct objective of learning. He/she has to maintain the direction to be achieved on time. No extension is permitted. An educator is one who teaches about the importance of time.

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says: Verily (By the time). Man is in loss, except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience." Thus, the task of an educator is not merely to transform knowledge, but also to make the students become pious and do righteous good deeds.

In this regards, it is understandable what has been addressed by the Minister of National Education and Culture, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Nuh, that the key of education in Indonesia is teacher and lecturer. Both of them are keys for the successful of Indonesian education; qualified student always depends on qualified teacher.

Education in Indonesia requires teacher and lecturer who have broader view about the future. They should have their own vision and have to work more than just to fulfill their main tasks. They should not teach only to fulfill their assigned weekly work hours, but they should educate their students in order to be pious and righteous people in the future.

In line with this, the Ministry of National Education and Culture as well as the Ministry of Religious Affairs have currently tried to find out an ideal and applicable concept of character education. There is awareness that education simply for producing smart and competitive people will be only resulting in people with spirit of competition in conflict mood. But, by adding character education that leads to righteous personality, education will result in people who understand their rights and obligations.

Character education is certainly not the education that only emphasizes the rational knowledge, but it is an education based on conscience. This kind of education does not only touch the sensitivity of the brain, but also the sensitivity of the heart. In addition, teacher and lecturer must be those who understand the philosophy of education, the conscience-based education. It is perceived that when the heart of a man is good, the whole system of his life will be good as well and vice versa.

Character education has three basic principles. First, religious principle, the principle of monotheism which is based on the belief that there is no God but Allah and that the

Prophet Muhammad is His messenger. These two concepts constitute the manifestation of syahadah: "*La ilaha illah, Muhammdur Rasulullah.*" This concept would then be implemented in the concept of worship and morals which constitute the basic principle of Islamic teachings.

Secondly, the national principle. This principle alludes the enforcement of the four national pillars which include Pancasila (the Five Principle), the 1945 Constitution, the Unity in Diversity, the United Nation of the Republik of Indonesia. These pillars are significant because the nation must still exist in the midst of the global relationship. This nation should remain on Pancasila, because it has been tested as a binder for this nation. What has been established by the founding father of this country would not be abandoned whatsoever. There should be no other ideology in this country but Pancasila. Furthermore, we should defend the 1945 Constitution. We are fortunate that this country has the 1945 Constitution to ensure the implementation of the state administration, nationality, politics and governance suitable for Indonesia. The following pillar is what the so called NKRI (United Nation of the Republik of Indonesia). It also has become the most appropriate choice for the people of Indonesia. With over 17 000 islands, more than 300 tribes and languages, the choice of NKRI is suitable for the nation.

Equally important is the diversity or multiculturalism. It is absolutely relevant to Indonesia as plural and multicultural nation to have a principle of unity in diversity. The principle of diversity is a principle that is suitable for this nation to keep moving forward in the relationship with the international community.

Thirdly, the implementative principle. On this principle, all the concepts of education for the sake of God (*lillah*) and for God (*billah*) reflected in the concept of honesty, sincerity, responsibility, trustworthiness, openness and accountability will be translated into indicators that can be assessed and tested. Through the measurable learning process, evaluation and materials, it will be seen how much education is successful.

However, it should be noted that the character education necessitates not only the intellectual ability but also the attitudes and actions as well. Consequently, standard of assessment should be formulated clearly, so that the standard of graduate competencies can be evaluated according to education principles.

Thus, the concept of national character education based on the *billah lillah* principles will succeed as long as all the components run dynamically as a mutually supportive system.***