Character Education through Indonesian Language Course on Higher Education

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Abstract. The function of education is to develop capabilities as well as to form dignified national character and civilization in order to develop the nation’s intellectual life. The aims of education on various levels are to form the students’ character. In its implementation, character education is conducted by integrating character values in the learning process. Thus, in this study, the researcher investigated the form of the implementation of character education through the learning process of an Indonesian language course in university. This study was a case study at Universitas Muslim Indonesia (UMI). The model used in this study is the Research and Development Model by Borg and Gall as well as Brown's stages of development. This study involved 200 university students from 13 faculties who were taught the Indonesian language. Indonesian language lecturers and the academic stakeholders of UMI also became the respondents in this study. The results found that Islamic university is a feature of character education at UMI. Furthermore, UMI students need character education through Indonesian language course. Fortunately, the lecturers had implemented character education in every element of the teaching but still not with the learning materials. Meanwhile, academic stakeholders understood that character education could be done through learning, university management, and students’ activities. This study concluded that character-based Indonesian learning materials were developed to complete character education at UMI and to meet the needs of students, lecturers, and academic stakeholders.

1. Introduction

Education is a nation’s foundation. A nation that has a strong character is able to become a dignified nation respected by other countries. (Susanti, 2013) Indonesia is a nation with great potential of human resources. In 2045 or 100 years of independence, Indonesia will enter a period of bonus demography. The excellence and competitiveness are demands for Indonesia's golden generation to prepare themselves to become the leader of nations. Indonesian human resources, primarily in the age of higher education (18-21 years) have a strategic role as leaders in various fields in 2045.

Being a nation with a good character has become the goal of the Indonesian. (Susanti, 2013) This is in accordance with the functions and objectives of national education as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 regarding the National Education System. Article 3 states that the functions of education are to develop capabilities and to form dignified national character and civilization in order to develop the nation's intellectual life. Meanwhile, national education aims to develop the students potential to be
human beings who believe and submissive the Almighty God as well as to be noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. (Rabiah, 2017)

Based on the aims and objectives of national education, it is clear that every level of education should be organized systematically to achieve those goals. It is related to the character education of students in order to be able to compete, be ethical, has moral, be polite, and to interact with society. (Rabiah, 2017) The implementation of character education through learning refers to the Character Education Development Code by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Thus, the implementation of character education in Indonesia consists of the following principles: (1) promoting basic ethical values as a basis for character, (2) identifying characters comprehensively in order to include thoughts, feelings, and behavior, (3) using sharp, proactive, and effective approach to build the character, (4) giving opportunities to students to show good behavior, (5) having a range of meaningful and challenging curriculum that respects all students, builds their character, and helps them to succeed, and (6) striving to grow students’ self-motivation (Asmani, 2011).

Character education in the learning process can be implemented through the following learning strategies: The first strategy is the autonomy strategy in which character education is placed as a separate course. The second strategy is the integration strategy in which the values and characters are united and formed in each other course. The third strategy is an extracurricular strategy through an additional activity oriented towards students’ character building. The forth it the collaboration strategy in which those three models are combined in all activities. (Barnawi & Arifin, 2012) The implementation of character education has been carried out in various aspects including: policy (Lumpkin, 2008; Elias, 2009), learning process (Heywood, 2013), contextual learning (Komalasari, 2012), the practice of Islamic boarding schools and religious education (Hayah, 2017; La Fua, 2018), the implementation in the learning process of Physics and Chemistry (Mulyana & Suherman, 2017; Suherman et al., 2017; Hartutik et al., 2017) and learning process in local languages (Permatasari & Hakam, 2018; Rabiah, 2016), as well as the implementation in universities (Walid, 2011; Susanti, 2013; Winarni, 2013; Rabiah, 2013; Derlina & Sabani, 2014; Rabiah, 2014; Ramdhani & Muhammadiyah, 2015; Rabiah, 2017).

To the best of the researcher's understanding, character education in an Indonesian language course in higher education has not received much attention. In fact, the Indonesian language is a united language that was declared in the Youth Pledge in 1928. Moreover, after the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, the Indonesian language has become the official language of Indonesia. The Indonesian language also becomes a required Personality Development Course in every university according to the Decree of the Directorate General of Higher Education No 43/DIKTI/Kep/2006. (Rabiah, 2017) Thus, this study has a novelty in the implementation of character education in the learning process of an Indonesian language course in higher education. In this case, the study was conducted at the Universitas Muslim Indonesia.

2. Methods
This study used a mixed method approach. Creswell in Emzir (2012) mentioned that there are three approaches often used in research namely quantitative approach, qualitative approach, and mixed methods approach. Furthermore, in conducting research and development, there are some method used, namely (1) descriptive method, used in the initial study to collect data on existing conditions; (2) evaluative method, used to evaluate the process of testing the development of a product; and (3) experimental method, used to test the efficacy of the resulting product.

Stages took in this study refers to the model of learning materials development in Borg and Gall's research and development. There were 10 steps as follows: (1) need analysis, (2) planning, (3) developing the preliminary form of the product, (4) preliminary field testing, (5) revising the main product, (6) main field testing, (7) operational product revision, (8) operational field testing (9) the final product revision and (10) dissemination and implementation. (Borg & Gall, 2003).

Furthermore, the steps adopted from Brown include three phases are outlined as follows. In the development phase with activities: (1) the analysis of needs, (2) test the basic ability and student characteristics, and (3) develop teaching material as a product. Later in the implementation phase
conducted activities: (1) test in class, (2) discussion between the author-teachers on learning materials, (3) the revision of learning materials products. The phase of evaluation activities are (1) evaluating learning materials, and (2) the final revision of the learning materials, and (3) the distribution and publication (whether in a small or large). (Brown, 1995).

This research involves students from Universitas Muslim Indonesia in 13 faculties who use the Indonesian language as a general course (MKU) or personality development course (MPK). Indonesian language course at the Universitas Muslim Indonesia is taught in Odd Semester and Even Semester. The faculty that places the Indonesian language in odd semester consists of 7 Faculties. While in the even semester consists of 6 Faculties. The number of students who follow the Indonesian language courses can reach 4.440 students per academic year with the distribution of 2.070 students in the odd semester and 2.370 students in the even semester. This study involved 200 students, Indonesian language lecturers, and the academic stakeholders of Universitas Muslim Indonesia as the respondents.

3. Result and Discussion

The implementation of character education in the learning process of an Indonesian language course at Universitas Muslim Indonesia was developed with the Research and Development model of Borg and Gall as well as Brown’s. The overall stages conducted have found the following findings:

3.1 Islamic Campus Program as the Feature of Character Education at Universitas Muslim Indonesia

Universitas Muslim Indonesia has been conducted character education by implementing Islamic campus program that becomes the feature of this campus. One of the courses of this program is related to academic and the learning process. The process of academic and students' learning shall be conducted in the Islamic way or Islamization of science. In other words, Islamic style and feature are integrated into the teaching and learning process of all disciplines, especially Islamic religious education, by establishing the curriculum and presentation methods as well as eradicating the students and the entire academic community of UMI who are illiterate Qur’an. (Observations, January to February 2017)

3.2 Students’ Need for Character Education in Indonesian Language Course

The needs analysis was conducted by distributing questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 50 questions divided into 9 sections. One of the sections was asking about students’ need for character values developed. There were four questions in that section which focused on exploring students’ needs. This first question in this section was to know whether the students wish to publish assignments through conferences, scientific journals or student and teacher collaboration book. Most of the students responded that it was needed with a percentage of 36%. Meanwhile, 24% of them responded that it was required. However, there were also 22% of them answered that it was rather needed and 10% of them felt that it was less needed. This shows that students still have the desire to explore their abilities in the field of publication. (Need Analysis Questionnaire for UMI students, May to June 2017).

The following question was to know whether the students understand the position of Indonesian as a united language that strengthens national character. The majority of the students or 50% of the students stated that they were needed. This reflects student understanding of the role of the Indonesian language as one of the pillars of Indonesian unity. Furthermore, the question to know the students’ intention to be involved and pro-active to become a character person was answered by the majority of students, 62% of them, with a very needed. This shows their personal desire to be personally pro-active in character (Need Analysis Questionnaire for UMI students, May to June 2017).

The last question of the character section was whether the students understand that the Universitas Muslim Indonesia has Islamic character and has the vision to produce students who are knowledgeable, have scientific deeds, moral character, and high competitiveness. The majority of students, 68% of them, stating that they were needed, answered this question. This shows that character education carried out by the university can be well understood by students. (Need Analysis Questionnaire for UMI students, May to June 2017).

3.3 Lecturers’ Understanding of the Implementation of Character Education
From the questionnaires filled out by lecturers in questions related to character education, the understanding of character education was obtained. Character education was understood as an effort by lecturers in educating students to have positive character values. Some lecturers stated that they have applied high discipline in the students’ attendance and time of submitting assignments. It is implemented in order to foster the character of students’ discipline. Meanwhile, others stated that character education could be applied in every stage of learning such as familiarizing students with reading material before the material was taught in the classroom as a guide to read. During the class, the students were also given the task of groups to foster a cooperative spirit. By the end of the course, the students were asked to do the task critically to sharpen their critical reasoning (Need Analysis Questionnaire for UMI lecturers of Indonesian language, May to June 2017).

3.4 Academic Stakeholders’ Understanding of the Implementation of Character Education
In addition to field observations, stakeholders of the university were also given a need analysis questionnaire. The results show that their understanding of the character education in higher education. They assumed that character education could be done through three groups of activities, namely (1) integrating character education and the learning process; (2) integrating character education and university management; as well as (3) integrating character education and students’ activities. According to the interviews, several vice deans have begun to apply character values to the management of higher education. One of which, they adopted the character of prophet Muhammad namely *siddiq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *tabligh* (advocacy) and *fathanah* (wisdom). These values were also applied to lecturers, including those who teach Indonesian. However, there had not been any guidebook for the lecturer to apply those values. Therefore, the implemented values were still in form of general values. Other efforts carried out by the university were installing attributes that contain religious messages as part of the Islamic Campus program. Furthermore, the development of students’ character values that have been implemented by UMI was developed through three things namely Islamic campus program, Islamic course (*pesantren kilat*) and spiritual enlightenment. Those programs have been launched since 1985 (Need Analysis Questionnaire for UMI academic stakeholders, May to June 2017).

3.5 Character-based Indonesian Language Learning Materials
In addition to the findings in the preliminary study (observation) and the analysis of the needs of students, lecturers, and academic stakeholders, the process of developing character-based Indonesian language learning materials at Universitas Muslim Indonesia also took place. The development process involved pre-tests and post-tests, Focus Group Discussions, product revisions, small group, and large groups trials, experts validation, and the test of the effectiveness of teaching using the developed materials to a limited and wide scale of publishing. The effectiveness of the implementation of character-based Indonesian language learning materials that had been developed was seen through the test using the pre-test and post-test data obtained from the experimental class (X1) and the control class (X2). The $t_{\text{count}}$ was 15.8 while $t_{\text{table}}$ had the significant level of 0.05 and 68 degree of freedom of 1.67. Thus, the results obtained are $t_{\text{count}} (15.8) > t_{\text{table}} (1.67)$ which means that there are differences in Indonesian learning outcomes in the experimental group and the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the developed teaching material products have a high level of effectiveness.

4. Conclusion
Character education is needed by Indonesia’s golden generation to prepare themselves as future leaders of the nation. The implementation of character education can be done through a learning process, one of which is through Indonesian language courses at Universitas Muslim Indonesia (UMI). Character education at UMI is done through Islamic campus programs, Islamic course (*pesantren kilat*) and spiritual enlightenment. Character-based Indonesian language learning material was developed in this study to complete character education at UMI and to meet the needs of students, lecturers, and academic stakeholders. Through an effectiveness test, the product in form of learning materials developed is known to have a high level of effectiveness.

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