Ideological Foundations and Problems: Comparative Analysis of Character Education in Singapore and Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study compares Singapore and Indonesia's approaches to character education. The three main subjects of this study are the problems and ideological foundations of character education in the two countries. A qualitative research method with a library approach, often referred to as desk research, is the methodology used. Study findings, published works, or official policies related to character education in the two countries are the sources of the data. Character education in Indonesia is based on the country's ideology, culture, religious views and customs, according to the research findings. Similarly, government policy constraints, official ideologies and philosophical beliefs form the foundation of character education in Singapore. Singapore and Indonesia both have problems with free sex, vandalism, thuggery and juvenile crime. Variations in stress levels affect the character of young people due to the high level of mobility in Singapore.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of changing behavior, acquiring knowledge, and gaining real-world experience to help students become more proficient thinkers and reasoners. In the modern digital age, education is evolving rapidly. It's not just adults who appreciate technological advancements; primary school-aged children can also benefit from this. In education, technology is often utilized to help teachers and students communicate with each other. Technology users should highlight the positive side of today's technological advancements, as there are both positive and negative impacts. Therefore, character education is needed to control the attitudes, morals, and habits of students. (Jalaluddin and isi H. A, 2020)

According to Elkind and Sweet (2004) character education is a deliberate effort to help people understand, care about and core to ethical values. Where we think about the kinds of character traits we want for our children, it is clear that we want them to be able to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right, and then do what they believe to be right, even in the face of pressure from without and in

temptation.(Hadi, 2019) It is further explained that character education is everything that teachers do, which is able to influence the character of learners. Teachers help shape the character of learners. This includes exemplifying how the teacher behaves, how the teacher speaks or conveys material, how the teacher tolerates, and various other related things. There are 1,540 verses in the Quran that explain morals or character. This shows that Islam from the beginning paid great attention to morals or character. Because morals are the main foundation of humans throughout history. An expression "Characters isn't inherited. One builds its daily by the way one thinks and acts, thought by thought, action by action."

According to Ramli (2003), character education has the same essence and meaning as moral education and moral education. The goal is to shape children's personalities, so that they become good human beings, good citizens, and good citizens. The criteria for good human beings, good citizens, and good citizens for a society or nation, in general, are certain social values, which are heavily influenced by the culture of the community and nation. Therefore, the essence of character education in the context of education in Indonesia is value education, namely education of noble values originating from the culture of the Indonesian nation itself, in order to foster the personality of the younger generation. (Putri, 2020) Character education taught to children is not only carried out by teachers at a school, but also by parents, who must provide examples of positive character, so that habituation and good exemplary values become the foundation for further positive personality. (Rika, 2020)

Recently, the nation has experienced events that have worried the younger generation and the wider community about the emergence of various problems. Among them are the never-ending problem of corruption that has become a topic of conversation in various mass media, the rise of hoax (fake) news that makes chaos and anxiety for many people. Cyber bullying that has hit the younger generation, adults to the older generation as there are no rules or manners in speaking both in the real world and in cyberspace, berating each other, bringing each other down by opening the disgrace of the other person. Another example that occurs in character problems is about prostitution that worries and disturbs the wider community, this shows the decline in morality or character of the nation today. (Julaeha, 2019) Indonesia's current condition shows that education has failed to build a strong foundation for the nation's character. The moral confusion faced by Indonesia has led to a number of problems. These issues include the increase in immoral behavior, corruption, murder, fanaticism, and so on. (Ei Anisya, 2023)

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Kids today often have bad habits when it comes to utilizing technology. The world is getting smaller as a result of technological advancements, as we know, and today's youth have easy access to information and fun. These devices give users access to a wide array of crime, violence, and even movies that are not suitable for young viewers. The younger generation in the country is negatively affected by this. The increase in crimes committed by the younger generation, including brawls, sexual assaults and thefts, is one proof of this. Print and electronic media almost always spread this kind of news. (Putri, 2020)

In accordance with the above viewpoint, many teachers believe that character education is just a supplement, and that children should be given more academic instruction at the expense of character development. Many teachers still think that character education is just information (cognitive). (Styowati, 2020).

The author of this essay seeks to discuss the implementation of character education in two different Southeast Asian countries: Indonesia and Singapore. Singapore is known for its strong culture, which is integrated into all aspects of the country, as is Indonesia. This article is noteworthy because it compares the two educational structures and can be used as a resource to help each country adopt character education to achieve the best results. (Lubis, 2019).

Other academics have conducted research on this topic, but this research differs from ours in several ways. Based on the research outlined, there appears to be a lack of similarity in the discussion of methodology and the challenges faced by the two nations in implementing character education. So far, research has focused on the benefits of implementing character education in the two countries only, but

not much attention has been paid to the challenges or drawbacks. Based on our literature review, there are differences in the methodologies and challenges faced by the two countries in implementing character education. Previous research tends to focus more on the benefits of implementing character education in the two countries, but not much on the challenges or weaknesses. Our research seeks to fill this gap by paying special attention to the challenges faced and weaknesses in the implementation of character education, which have not been widely discussed in previous studies.

This study compares character education in Singapore and Indonesia, focusing on three main areas: foundations, constraints and approaches. Surely this research will help educators, parents and school administrators in instilling moral values to the next generation of the nation. This research intends to assist professors in presenting noble values to their students in a way that goes beyond the curriculum, and students personalize their morality in accordance with Pancasila and Islamic beliefs. So that positive character can be expressed in the daily behavior of the students, so as to influence the development of strong human resources.

2. METHODS

This research uses the subjective writing method with content analysis to investigate 'A Comparative Analysis of Character Education in Singapore and Indonesia'. The research process began by collecting data from various sources, such as academic writings, diaries, books and other publications relevant to character education in both countries. (Agung, 2021) These sources were chosen because they provided rich and varied information on the topic under study. The first step in this research was the identification and collection of data sources. The researcher collected data from libraries, digital archives, and other online sources. All data collected was then categorized based on relevance and suitability to the research topic. (Parland-von Essen et al., 2018)

Once the data was collected, the next step was content analysis. The researcher read and reviewed each document in depth, noting key points and emerging themes. The data was analyzed to find patterns, differences and similarities in character education in Singapore and Indonesia. The researcher also triangulated the data to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings. This involves comparing information from different sources to identify consistency and address potential bias.(Agung, 2021) The data collection procedure involved systematic documentation, where each piece of information was recorded, organized and stored neatly for further analysis.(Agung, 2021) From a methodological point of view, this research aims to offer a deeper understanding of character education by contextualizing the findings within different time frames and social conditions in each country. With this approach, this study not only describes the practice of character education but also identifies the challenges and weaknesses that may be faced during its implementation, which makes an important contribution to the existing literature.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Foundations of Character Education in Indonesia and Singapore

The results obtained from the research have to be supported by sufficient data. The research results and the discovery must be the answers, or the research hypothesis stated previously in the introduction part. According to Edyya, character education is a system that instills strong moral principles in learners by combining information, self-awareness, willingness, and the willingness and ability to live these principles towards Allah SWT, other people, the environment, and the country itself to achieve character education goals. (Edyya, 2020)

The purpose of national education is to train students to become productive citizens by developing their skills and building a dignified national morality and culture in order to educate the nation's life, as stated in Article 3 of Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System. They must have high moral character, be strong, competent, creative, independent, and democratic. And they must have devotion to God Almighty, so that our children grow up to be proud members of society. Because children are

the best gift for every parent and a means of the nation's next generation in carrying out the ideals of the country's struggle. (Yulia, 2012)

Character education in Indonesia is influenced by various factors such as national ideology, religion and culture. Culture is the main source of character formation, and the idea of cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation becomes the basis for thinking, acting, and making decisions.(Mawardi and Indayani, 2020) Many characters are directly related to Indonesian culture. The Ministry of Education and Culture promotes character education based on the culture of gotong royong, which has developed into the spirit of the nation's growth.(Ainiyah, 2013)

As stated in Presidential Regulation No. 87/2017, the moral development of students is the foundation of education reform starting from school. Character education has been returned to schools to prepare students for the challenges of development in the era of globalization. In Indonesia, school performance is evaluated based on student character. But in practice, most schools in Indonesia with higher accreditation do not necessarily have excellent student character. This is because primary school accreditation highly values cognitive abilities. (Arita, 2018)

The foundation of national ideology comes from culture, and character education in Indonesia comes from state ideology. The 1945 Constitution and Pancasila, Indonesia's national ideology, cannot be separated from character education. Indeed, the nation's personality is formed on the noble foundation of Pancasila. The five commandments are more than just a philosophy that, in the absence of action, will turn into a sacred statement. Every aspect of Pancasila reflects the character of the country. (Juliani & Bastian, 2021).

Religious principles provide another foundation besides ideology. Since Indonesia is recognized as a nation that believes in God, character development is also based on religious principles that are upheld. It cannot be denied that most of the moral principles taught in the country's education system stem from religious doctrine. In fact, there is no way that the moral principles adopted by the Ministry of Education and Culture do not conflict with religious doctrine. (Ramayulis, 2005, p. 122)

Just like in Indonesia, in Singapore, character education is upheld, except that they prioritize the philosophical foundation that has been running in the country. Undoubtedly, education in Singapore is among the largest in the world, second only to Finland. The nation embraces a number of fundamental ideologies, including reconstructionism, existentialism, analytical philosophy, and the philosophy of progressivism. Teaching, talent, education, and other educational phrases and concepts are analyzed and explained by analytical philosophy. It also highlights different educational slogans, such as teaching students instead of giving lessons. Thus, it can be concluded that linguistics, logic, and analytical methods are the tools of this philosophy. (Wahab, 2022)

The next philosophy is progressivism, with John Dewey at its center. He argued that education is more than just imparting facts to children; it is also about developing thinking abilities and skills through proper stimulation. According to this perspective, education is a social activity and schools are social institutions. According to this viewpoint, education is a way of life and not a method to prepare for the future. Subject-specific demands should match the needs of individual students. (Tan Sisman and Karsantik, 2021)

Existentialism, the second philosophical pillar, argues that the primary purpose of education is to enable students to experience their lives fully, not to teach them how to overcome existential difficulties. This school of thought argues that educational achievement should be evaluated not only based on what students have learned and know, but also what they can know and do. Consequently, this viewpoint opposes indoctrination as an approach to teaching. The last philosophical school recognized in Singapore is reconstructionism, which holds that education and social upheaval are synonymous. (Ozturk, 2023)

This approach sees the curriculum as problem-oriented. While there are various schools of thought in Singapore, the government believes that education should prepare young people for the future in various ways. Morality, sociality, spirituality, taste and reason are important components of life that should be taught in schools. Therefore, education should prioritize children's emotional and spiritual

development alongside their cognitive development. (Carter, Frewen and Chunn, 2014) Students who receive education can also become responsible citizens and better integrate into society. This suggests that in addition to teaching students about society, education should also help them see the problems, actively engage in the thinking process, and accept moral and social responsibility for its progress. (Arif, 2018)

Singapore emphasizes communitarian ideology when it comes to developing moral values in primary school-age students. Communitarianism is a sociopolitical philosophy that prioritizes community and the well-being of society over individual interests. This philosophy is considered radical centrist, emphasizes community and is sometimes determined by economic leftism and conservatism. (Al-Hazaimeh et al., 2022) Communitarianism prioritizes the interests of society and community, and rejects excessive individualism and unfettered laissez faire capitalism. Proponents of communitarianism, known as communitarians, consider the importance of community to be underestimated in liberal views. (Ridho, 2005)

Character education in Singapore is based on communitarian ideology. Communitarianism can be characterized by three main points: (Charlene Tan, 2015)

1. The standard of morality lies in the cultural factors of a particular society, within the interpretive framework that a particular society uses to understand and navigate the world.
2. The self is essentially a social entity; the idea of the self as something separate from the social roles one plays is meaningless.
3. Mutual convenience takes precedence over individual interests.

Singapore's education system is highly adaptable to the growing child. This shows that the psychological formation of a student varies from stage to stage, so no two students' personal psychology is the same. Students from 3 to 7 years old should not be exposed to difficult topics like math. As this would change their way of thinking, children who should still be playing are subjected to a rigorous educational process, ensuring that when they reach high school, they are young, easily bored, and unwilling to stay in class for long. In Singapore for example, when students start primary school in grade one, they are taught to write while listening to music tailored to their developmental stage. In contrast, students in Indonesia are taught writing and math (without music) from kindergarten age. Therefore, students who are still at play age are required to understand arithmetic and learn to read. (Sa'adah, 2019)

Singapore's Prime Minister is urging parents to support education reform. Lee claims that in addition to providing practical skills, Singapore education aims to develop ideals and character traits that are invisible yet highly significant. The Singapore Prime Minister continued, saying that students should be encouraged to make connections between what they learn in textbooks and real-world scenarios rather than placing a higher priority on academic achievement.(Devi Ponnusamy and Tan, 2018) Primary education in Singapore supports lifelong learning and helps students identify their interests and skills to help them realize their full potential.(Faradina et al., 2024) Upon graduation, students should be able to maintain morals and ethics and develop an honorable culture. However, they must accept and be aware of differences and be responsible for their own community, region, and country. passed a law mandating ten years of compulsory education for all citizens, six-year-olds, and parents at risk of fines for not enrolling their children in school (Lantip, 2012).

Character Education Problems in Indonesia and Singapore

Primary school education in Singapore and Indonesia typically lasts six years, consisting of a two-year orientation program following the completion of the four-year primary school curriculum. (Sa'adah, 2019) Students will sit the PSLE (Primary School Leaving Examination) at the end of their sixth year of schooling. Upon completion of six years of secondary school (3+3), students will pursue an additional three to four years of study. Various circumstances indicate that character education is becoming an increasingly pressing issue for students in primary schools. There are several character issues at its core as well. (Hidayah, 2018)

The problem of character education in Indonesia involves various aspects and challenges. Some of the problems that the character education system in Indonesia may face include:

1. Disparities in Entry and Quality of Education: The gap exists between urban and rural areas, as well as between more affluent and less developed regions. This may affect students' opportunities for equitable character education. (Faradina et al., 2024)

2. Lack of Resources and Facilities: Some schools may lack adequate resources, including books, sports facilities and libraries. This may limit character education efforts that involve extracurricular activities and non-academic skill development. (Ridlwan et al., 2021)

3. Overcrowded Curriculum: Some critics argue that the formal education curriculum is overcrowded with academic material, leaving little time for character development and social skills. This can result in a less focused understanding and application of character values. (Thonthowi, 2024)

4. Multicultural Challenges: Indonesia is culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse. It can be difficult to harmonize character ideals in the face of so many differences. Character education must represent the diversity of Indonesian society. (Suyitno, 2012)

5. Involvement of parents and communities: Parents and communities are often not optimally involved in supporting character education. Low involvement can hinder character building efforts outside the school environment. (Ihwani et al., 2024)

6. Technology and Social Media Challenges: The influence of technology and social media can have an impact on students' mindset and behavior. It is important to teach digital skills and filter content in line with character values. (Yulianti and Agustang, 2022)

Efforts to solve these problems include curriculum reform, improved teacher training, improved education infrastructure, and increased awareness of the importance of character education at all levels of education. Collaboration between the government, schools, guardians and the community as a whole is needed to achieve positive changes in character education in Indonesia. (Setiawati, 2022)

Singapore, on the other hand, is known to have an excellent education system that focuses on developing students' character in addition to academic knowledge. However, every education system may face certain challenges. (Kent, 2017) Some of the issues that may arise in the context of character education in Singapore or anywhere could involve:

1. High Academic Pressure: A highly competitive education system that emphasizes high academic achievement can cause excessive stress on students. This can result in a lack of focus on character development and non-academic values. (Soh Lung and Siok Hoon, 2018)

2. Cultural Diversity: Singapore is a multicultural society with various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. Promoting understanding, tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity is an important challenge in character education. (Berutu and Mutiawati, 2023)

3. Technology and Media Influences: Technological developments and exposure to digital media can affect the way children learn and develop character. Managing media and technology influences to support positive character development can be challenging. (Tan, 2018)

4. Mental Awareness and Emotional Wellbeing: Character education also includes aspects of emotional well-being and mental health. Addressing stress, anxiety and mental health issues among students is an important part of character education. (Liem et al., 2017)

5. Parent and Community Involvement: Moral education is not just the job of the school; parents and the community must also take part in it. The development of a child's personality may be hindered due to lack of parental or community involvement. (Pak Tee, 2020)

Of course, the Singapore government has come up with a sensible plan to address this issue. The only difference between Singapore and Indonesia when it comes to character education issues is that the stress of high expectations in life also plays a role there. Both countries struggle with issues of parental inattention and an unsupportive environment.

Some previous studies have identified similar issues. For example, Hidayah (2018) found that the gap in education quality between urban and rural areas in Indonesia affects the implementation of character education. This study confirms the findings by adding that the lack of resources and facilities is also a major hindrance. In Singapore, high academic pressure was identified as a challenge in Arif's (2018) study. This study corroborates the findings and adds that while there is a strong focus on moral development, the stress of high expectations can be detrimental to student well-being and the implementation of character education. This research makes a novel contribution by showing that although both countries have strong philosophical and ideological foundations for character education, there are significant differences in the challenges faced and implementation on the ground. In Indonesia, the main challenges lie in resource gaps and education quality, while in Singapore, the main challenges are academic pressures and student well-being. This research supports and enriches the existing literature by adding an in-depth comparative analysis of the challenges and implementation of character education in Indonesia and Singapore. It corrects the view that high accreditation is always directly proportional to the quality of student character in Indonesia and argues that academic pressures in Singapore may hinder optimal character development. As such, it provides important new insights for the development of more effective character education policies and practices in both countries.

4. CONCLUSION

Singapore and Indonesia's approaches to character education are not the same. Indonesia emphasizes academic learning from an early age, but Singapore is more concerned with students' psychological growth and tailoring teaching to the child's developmental stage. In both countries, character education is also influenced by the country's ideology, culture and religion. While Indonesia focuses more on nationalism and religious beliefs, Singapore emphasizes convenience between neighbors and group interests. However, there are problems in implementing character education in both countries, including a lack of teacher preparation, poor school infrastructure and a lack of understanding of the importance of the subject. The authors provide a number of recommendations to improve the way character education is implemented in both countries. First and foremost, curriculum reform is needed that prioritizes character development in students. Second, more teacher preparation is needed in the implementation of character education. Third, to facilitate the implementation of character education, improvements to education infrastructure are needed. Fourth, the government, educational institutions, parents and the general public need to do a better job of educating the public about the value of character education at all levels of education. Through these initiatives, it is believed that character education can be better implemented in both countries and future generations of people will become strong and moral citizens.

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