

TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER VALUES AS THE BASIS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING: WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS UNDERSTAND?

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Abstract

This study aims to find out how character values can be used as a basis for implementing an independent learning curriculum in higher education. For this reason, it is necessary to know how students understand how to do this. This research was conducted at the State University of Medan. The research subjects are students and lecturers at Medan State University. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. To produce data that can be accounted for, it is necessary to do data validity and analysis. The data that has been obtained is then checked using a triangulation model. The data obtained were then analyzed through four stages, namely data presentation, data reduction, verification, and drawing conclusions. The results of the research above show that in general, students express character is very necessary. One of these character values is that which is implemented at the State University of Medan, namely citizenship, justice, honor, responsibility, caring and being trustworthy. The six character values can be implemented if they are carried out through the elaboration of intellectual virtues, civic virtues, moral virtues and performance virtues. These four competencies are mutually reinforcing to encourage behavioral changes in students and lecturers. The results of this study are expected to be a guide in implementing independent learning policies, so that students can face various social changes, cultural changes and technological advances to enter a better world of work.

Keywords: character value; independent learning; students.

Introduction

Universities' efforts to strengthen the competence of graduates are through the involvement and collaboration of various businesses and industries. This method is considered effective

for aligning the competencies obtained by students with the needs of the world of work. There are three reasons why collaboration is needed: First, the challenges in the business world and industry are very diverse, so this will help students to

strengthen their competencies. Second, the business world and industry require competent regeneration in their respective fields. Students who study directly in the business and industrial world will gain experience according to their competence. Third, encourage universities to be more adaptive and flexible to the world of work, business and industry. This is in accordance with the needs of the people who are entering the era of the digital revolution 4.0 so that every university graduate is expected to be more creative and innovative in facing challenges in the world of work in the future.

To achieve the above objectives, various policies have been carried out, one of which is through independent learning, independent campus. According to Junaidi (2020) that the independent learning policy of an independent campus will encourage students to become independent learners so that they get challenges or opportunities to develop the capacity, personality, creativity, and needs of students, and so that students can seek and find knowledge through realities and field dynamics such as requirements abilities, real problems, social interaction, collaboration, self-management, performance demands, targets and achievements.

One of the policies issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture to achieve this goal is to give students the right to study three semesters outside their study program (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Kemendikbud, 2020). There are three reasons why

this policy is important to implement (1) Helping students find passions that match their scientific fields (2) Providing space and motivation for students to learn more outside their universities, so that they get new relationships and experiences that are more meaningful (3) Encouraging universities to be able to design and implement innovative learning processes so that knowledge, attitudes and skills are achieved as future needs. These three goals are described through various activities that support students to study outside campus such as:

(1) internships/work practices in industry or other workplaces, (2) implementing community service projects in villages, (3) teaching in educational units, (4) participating in student exchanges, (5) conducting research, (6) conducting entrepreneurial activities, (7) create independent studies/projects, and (8) participate in humanitarian programs (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Kemendikbud, 2020).

The various activities above are an effort to answer the challenge of how to prepare students to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Various new literacy skills, such as data literacy, technological literacy, human literacy (social literacy) need to be learned by students who may not be studied at their original university (Suryaman, 2020). By giving students the freedom to take study loads outside the study

program, either in one university, they are facilitated to master various sciences that are useful in the world of work. (Suryaman, 2020). The problem is how universities are able to prepare students to adapt to these new policies. Furthermore, how students are able to adapt to new people in various universities, the business/industry world, or the wider community. And how students have the motivation, commitment, fighting power and toughness values in learning something new so that it becomes the result of the education implemented. Because education is not really related to what is taught, but what students do after participating in learning (Castillo, 2014).

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to grow character values that become the grip of students in thinking, behaving, behaving and acting. Indeed, the character touches the deepest part of the human heart, not just small talk (Budimansyah, 2018). Therefore, the success of independent learning must come from the desire of students to make changes. This is in line with humanistic theory which emphasizes personal freedom, choice, sensitivity and personal responsibility to achieve a better life goal. This theory emphasizes that the behavior of each person is determined by the person himself and how humans understand the environment and themselves (Hendri, 2020).

To answer these challenges, universities must have a mission, namely to prepare students to be able to adapt to the times. Universities must have basic values that serve as

a guide in preparing students in a new era that is constantly changing. The presence of an independent learning curriculum should be an opportunity for universities to strengthen learning outcomes optimally if they are supported by character values that are consistently implemented. Because universities have a responsibility to prepare students for their professional lives; it requires intellectual, moral and civic virtues in addition to performance-enhancing qualities (University of Brimingham, 2017). For this reason, universities must have a culture that allows for building positive relationships, civic participation, and facilitating the acquisition of good character in students (University of Brimingham, 2017). Therefore, success in implementing independent learning really depends on the vision of the university in building a positive culture through strengthening its character values. This study examines how the character values of Medan State University can contribute in helping students to take part in various Merdeka Learning programs at the Merdeka Campus. Unimed has six main character values, namely citizenship, justice, honor, responsibility, caring and trustworthiness. The challenge is how these six characters can be used as a guide for students when entering the new curriculum for independent learning.

Method

Type, approach and place of research

This study aims to explore how the transformation of the six character values of Medan State University as a guide for students in implementing various Independence Learning programs at the Independence Campus. Departing from these objectives, this research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The research was conducted from August to September 2021. In this study, the data collection techniques used were in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The place of research was carried out at the State University of Medan, as one of the universities that participated in implementing the Independent Campus Learning Program.

Subject of Research

The subjects in this research are lecturers and students of Medan State University. The lecturers selected were those who understood the values of character, totaling 5 people, while the students selected in this study were those who participated in the independent learning program at the independent campus as many as 15 people. Thus, the number of subjects in this study was 20 people. All research subjects were selected with the following considerations: (1) understanding the concept of character education and (2) being involved in the independent campus learning program

Data Collection

This research uses various data collection tools such as interviews,

and documentation studies. Interviews and documentation studies were conducted to obtain information related to understanding the 6 values of Unimed's character and how to implement them in various independent learning programs for independent campuses.

Data Validity and Analysis

To produce data that can be accounted for, it is necessary to do data validity and analysis. The data that has been obtained is then checked using a triangulation model. Triangulation is a method used to synthesize data against the truth by using other data collection methods (Bachri, 2010). The data obtained is then analyzed through four stages, namely data presentation, data reduction, verification, and drawing conclusions.

Results and Discussion

To explore information related to students' understanding of the six Unimed character values, the researchers conducted interviews. The indicators used are (1) student responses to the importance of character; (2) What are the characters that students need to have to prepare themselves to face the demands of the business/work world in the future; (3) understanding of the six values of unimed characters; (4) the relevance of 6 character values with self-needs in dealing with future job demands; and (5) other characters that students need to have. The following are the results of respondents' answers:

Table 1 Research Results

Subject statement	Subject Code
Student response to the importance of character	
<i>I think that character is very important for students to have. Character is a trait that a person has. The character of students can be formed through the educational process, both education in the family, campus and community.</i>	CS 1, CS3
<i>Character is the values of human behavior related to God Almighty, oneself, fellow human beings, the environment and nationality which are manifested in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions based on religious norms, laws, manners, culture and customs. So for students, it is very important to have character or get character education, this aims to strengthen morals and commendable traits for students (in this case students). Because intelligence in the field of education alone is not enough without the provision of moral and strong character. So that when students enter the community, there will be no misuse of the knowledge learned during school.</i>	CS 2, CS5
<i>I think it is very important, because the character leads to good morals and character, you could say that his values and behavior will always be related to goodness, he will always remember the existence of God, and love others. We as students must have good character because intelligence in the field of education alone is not enough. We must have a strong moral stock and character. So that if one day we are students, we will not misuse the knowledge that we get. In other words, in every student character and education / science must go hand in hand</i>	CS 6, CS 8
<i>I think character is very important to be owned by anyone, not only humans but whoever it is</i>	CS 4, CS10
<i>I think it is very important because the character describes our nature as human beings, if our character is good then we are good people, character is also our identity as students, therefore we are obliged to get character education starting from elementary school to college aiming to strengthen morals and</i>	CS20

<p><i>commendable traits for students and become a good foundation after we graduate and it is hoped that the good characters that have been instilled will carry over into the world of work and whatever our profession will be</i></p>		<p><i>The character of creativity, because this creativity is a trait that must be possessed by students. Through creativity, students are required to be able to turn difficulties into opportunities. With limited circumstances, students will be stronger in living life. For example, suppose a student receives an allowance that is not enough for a month's needs. However, with creativity, the student can try to manage his pocket money until it is sufficient. You can cook yourself or find extra pocket money doing business or freelance work.</i></p>	<p>CS14, CS7</p>
<p><i>Character is indispensable. Therefore, students as the nation's generation must have various characters in order to live and compete for the world of work in the future</i></p>	<p>CS5, CS18</p>		
<p>What are the characters that students need to have to prepare themselves to face the demands of the business/work world in the future?</p>			
<p><i>Characters that need to be possessed by students to prepare themselves to face the demands of the business/work world in the future are responsibility, persistence, honesty and trustworthiness, loyalty. If someone has these characteristics, then he is very eligible to get the opportunity to work</i></p>	<p>CS16</p>	<p><i>In my opinion, students who will face the demands of the business/work world in the future can equip themselves by strengthening the various characters within each of them. These characters can be: Creative and able to solve problems appropriately, diligent learner, critical, disciplined, knowledgeable and global perspective, able to</i></p>	<p>CS11</p>

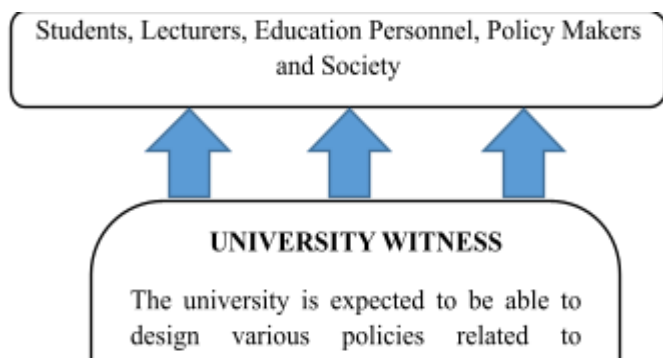
<i>communicate well, ready to take any risk, work hard and smart, have high integrity, tolerant, love others, flexible in interaction.</i>		<i>with future job demands, because as we know that UNIMED has 6 characters, namely citizenship, responsibility, honesty, discipline and trustworthiness.”</i>	
<i>It is very important, because character education at universities leads to the formation of individual students who have good behavior and have broad views and broad insights in dealing with the world of work later.</i>	CS14	The relevance of 6 Character Values in dealing with future job demands	
Student Understanding of 6 Character Values of Medan State University (Unimed)		<i>The six character values are relevant to our needs in dealing with future job demands.</i>	CS4,CS15
<i>Unimed has the motto "character building university" where unimed sets six pillars of character, namely: citizenship, fairness, respectful, responsible, caring, and trustworthy. With these six pillars, Unimed hopes to have an advantage in national and international competitiveness through the development of the six character pillars.</i>	CS10, CS5, CS6, CS7	<i>Very relevant because it fits the needs of the times</i>	CS17
<i>In my opinion, the 6 characters that UNIMED has instilled and developed are in accordance with the needs of students in dealing</i>	CS12, CS3, CS4,CS5	<i>In my opinion, the 6 character values, namely Discipline, Justice, Respect, Responsibility, Caring and Citizenship are very relevant to one's needs in facing demands.future work.</i>	CS1,CS5
		<i>Yes, I know and know the 6 pillars of Medan State University which have been the foundation and basis for implementing education on UNIMED's green campus. There are 6 pillars that become the spirit of the university and it should also become the spirit for its students. The six pillars are discipline, responsibility, caring,</i>	CS8,CS9

<i>honor, justice and citizenship</i>	
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Primary sources, processed based on the results of interviews

The results in the data above show that overall students understand the importance of character to help self-development now and in the future. Unimed's six character values can be understood as a guide for students in implementing various independent learning-campus independent programs. These six character values are very important because students will meet various people with different characteristics. Therefore, the six character values, namely citizenship, justice, honor, responsibility, caring and trustworthiness are used as a reference in thinking and acting. This is in line with what was stated by (Aydin & Cinkaya, 2018) that learning is expected to be able to strengthen positive approaches to encourage students to be critical of situations related to diversity in everyday life. Therefore, citizenship, justice, honor, responsibility, caring and being trustworthy must be used as guidelines for implementing independent learning in students.

In this regard, in the context of how these character values can be transformed in students, the researcher uses the theoretical framework developed by the University of Brimingham (2017) in the figure below:



From the picture above, it can be seen that there needs to be an elaboration between intellectual virtues, civic virtues, moral virtues and performance virtues. These four

competencies are mutually reinforcing to encourage behavior change in students and lecturers. Therefore, education is an institutional mechanism that focuses on strengthening the character of students. This is in line with what was stated by Rajasa (in Muslich, 2011: 3) that:

1. Education as an arena for the re-activation of the noble character of the Indonesian nation. Historically, the Indonesian nation is a nation that has heroic characters, nationalism, heroic nature, a spirit of hard work and courage to face challenges. The kingdoms of the archipelago in the past are evidence of the success of character building that creates an advanced, cultured and influential society.
2. Education as a means to awaken a national character that can accelerate development as well as mobilize domestic potential to increase the nation's competitiveness.
3. Education as a means to internalize the two aspects above, namely the successful re-activation of past cultures and innovative and competitive characters, into all aspects of the nation's life and government programs. This internalization must be a concerted effort from the entire community and government.

Education is expected to develop the quality of the nation's young generation in various aspects. For the independent learning policy,

it is hoped that it will not only contribute to strengthening student knowledge, but can shape various student characters. In this context, the six character values are expected to be able to guide students in thinking and acting. These six character values must be a guide for students when they are anywhere.

Conclusion

University is one of the institutions that has an obligation to increase the potential of students both intellectually and emotionally. Thus, education held at the University has a strategic role in developing the character of students. Students as learners are community members who try to develop their potential through the learning process available at certain levels, pathways, and educational units. Therefore, students are the subject of students in higher education, in order to achieve the goals of national education. Thus, students must be equipped with knowledge that is both cognitive and affective. The results of the research above show that in general, students express character is very necessary. One of these character values is that which is implemented at the State University of Medan, namely citizenship, justice, honor, responsibility, caring and being trustworthy. The six character values can be implemented if they are carried out through the elaboration of intellectual virtues, civic virtues, moral virtues and performance virtues. These four competencies are mutually

reinforcing to encourage behavior change in students and lecturers.

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