



Analyzing Thomas Lickona's Ideas in Character Education (A Library Research)

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Abstract. This paper focuses on examining the ideas put forth by Thomas Lickona. Lickona's perspective on character education revolves around a theory consisting of three fundamental elements: understanding what is morally right, having a deep appreciation for moral values, and actively applying these values in one's actions. The objective of this study is to elucidate Thomas Lickona's concept of character education and its potential as a strategy for cultivating strong moral character in students. Library research as the research methodology is employed in this study, aiming to systematically expound and scrutinize Thomas Lickona's ideas regarding character education in a manner that is accessible and comprehensible to readers. Upon thorough examination and analysis, it becomes evident that Thomas Lickona articulates ten essential ethical principles that ought to be instilled in students: wisdom, justice, patience, self-discipline, love, a positive attitude, diligence, sincerity, gratitude, and humility. Therefore, character education requires transparency and touch from early childhood to early adulthood.

Keywords: Character building; character education; Thomas Lickona

1 Introduction

In the 21st century, human society encountered significant social issues like religious extremism, making the concept of character paramount in our lives. Consequently, there arose a need to implement character education that places a strong emphasis on the ethical aspects of religion [1][2]. This form of education can be categorized into two enduring theoretical viewpoints: one stemming from Western philosophy and the other from Islamic thought. Western notions of values predominantly rely on human reasoning and tend to disregard revelation, even though revelation serves as the principal source of religion. It is argued that Western moral education has fallen short in acknowledging the enduring aspects that persist amidst evolving circumstances, often dismissing divine revelation, religious faith, or metaphysical insights as dependable moral foundations [3] [4]. Character education goes beyond being merely a duty of schools; it represents a collective obligation that encompasses educational institutions, families, and individuals from all facets of society[5]. This encompasses government bodies, various organizations, political entities, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and other community entities. Furthermore, in the practice of character education, there is a need for a widely diverse understanding and recognition [6][7][8][9]. Western viewpoints share the common goal of instilling virtuous qualities in individuals for the betterment of humanity and have the potential

to shape people's behaviors, thoughts, and emotions in diverse manners.

Based on this background, the writers believe that character education should be intensively internalized in school and outside of school from all values, both objective, subjective, and absolute values so that good deeds are motivated to achieve eternal welfare in the afterlife. Therefore, the writers want to examine the concept of thought of an influential figure in education related to a character in the Western world, namely Thomas Lickona.

Thomas Lickona has gained prominence in the realm of character education within Western society through his contributions [10]. His work has played a significant role in raising awareness about the importance of character education in the Western world. Notably, Lickona held positions on the board of commissioners for the Character Education Partnership and served on the advisory boards of the Character Count Coalition and the Medical Institute for Sexual Health. His involvement in these organizations followed his presidency of the Moral Education Association[11].

Recently, there has been a growing concern regarding the implementation of character education in schools and madrasahs. Additionally, the development of character within higher education institutions necessitates an understanding of relevant concepts, theories, methodologies, and applications of character building and character education. This is particularly important within the context of the Indonesian education system. Given these concerns, this article aims to delve into the topic of Education for Character Development, with a focus on an examination of Thomas Lickona's ideas as presented in character education.

2 Methodology

This research examines the perspective of character education according to Thomas Lickona by investigating the theories presented by this prominent figure through library research. The library research conducted in this study aims to acquire the theories and concepts within the research[12]. The theoretical analysis in this research involves gathering valid data and reinforcing them using a descriptive qualitative approach, resulting in descriptive data such as books and literature related to the research subject.

The research method employed is qualitative research through library research, which involves processing data and information by examining, reviewing, discussing, and collecting literature in a modern context. This study utilizes the descriptive content analysis method, which involves analyzing the content of the research object based on relevant sources. The research focuses on the importance of character education [13]. Data is processed by analyzing the content from several article sources to obtain valid data and information. Subsequently, the data is processed and analyzed through various stages, including selecting, comparing, merging, and categorizing data from relevant findings.

3 Findings and Discussion

Character education is not just about teaching children what is right and wrong but goes beyond that. Character education instills habits of goodness so that students understand, are capable of experiencing, and are willing to do what is right. Therefore, character education shares the same mission as moral or ethical education.

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Components of Building Good Character

a. Moral knowledge

Six moral knowledge areas can be the goals of character education; moral awareness, knowing moral values, taking perspective, moral reasoning, making decisions, and self-understanding[14].

Failure in morality often experienced by individuals of all age groups is a moral necessity, a condition where a good person can recognize that the situation they are facing involves a moral issue and requires further consideration. Children and teenagers, in particular, are vulnerable to such failures.

Moral values such as respecting life, being responsible, honesty, justice, tolerance, politeness, self-discipline, integrity, compassion, generosity, and courage are crucial factors in shaping a good character[15]. Understanding a moral value means knowing how to apply it in various situations. What does 'responsibility' mean when you see someone damaging school property? This is just one example.

Taking perspective is the ability to adopt another person's point of view, see someone else's situation from their perspective, and imagine how they would think, create, and feel. This is a prerequisite for moral consideration. We cannot treat people kindly and act justly toward them if we do not understand them. The fundamental goal of character education is to help students experience the world from the perspectives of others, especially those who are different from themselves[16].

Moral reasoning is understanding the meaning of being a moral person and why we should be moral. Why is keeping promises important? Why should we share with others? And so on. Children's moral development progresses gradually and guides their moral actions in various situations.

In real life, we often encounter dilemmas that force us to make choices. If we choose option 'A,' there are moral consequences to face, and if we choose option 'B,' there are also moral consequences to bear. In such situations, we must still decide to choose something with more positive moral consequences.

Understanding oneself is a form of moral knowledge that is very challenging to practice, but it is essential for character development. To become a moral person, one needs the ability to reflect on their behavior and critically evaluate it. Building self-awareness involves being conscious of one's strengths and weaknesses in character and knowing methods to improve those weaknesses[17]. Among the common weaknesses that people often have is the tendency to do what they desire and then seek justification based on available facts. Of the six moral knowledge areas mentioned above, all of them are qualities of the mind that shape moral knowledge and contribute equally to the cognitive aspect of character.

b. Moral Feelings

The emotional moral aspects that become components of moral feelings are: conscience, self-esteem, empathy, loving goodness, self-control, and humility.

Conscience has two sides: the cognitive side and the emotional side. The cognitive side guides a person in determining what is right, while the emotional side makes a person feel obligated to do what is right. Many people know what is right but feel no obligation to act by their knowledge.

Many individuals have underdeveloped consciences, so they do not feel obligated to avoid behaviors that they consider wrong. For someone who holds onto their conscience, morality is crucial. There is a commitment to uphold their moral values because these values are deeply rooted within them. People like this will not lie or engage in such actions because they identify with their moral conduct, and they would feel 'out of character' if they did something contrary to their values.

If someone has healthy self-esteem, they will value themselves. If they can value themselves, they will respect themselves. Therefore, it's unlikely they will harm their body or mind or let others harm them. However, it should also be remembered that high self-esteem does not guarantee the formation of good character. High self-esteem often arises from factors unrelated to good character, such as wealth, physical condition, popularity, or power. Self-esteem values like responsibility, honesty, and moral integrity can be taught to children both at home and in school[18].

Empathy is the ability to recognize and feel the experiences of others. The sense of empathy in a person exists from an early age, such as in toddlers at the age of one or two. The prevalence of juvenile delinquency indicates a lack of empathy in today's generation. It is the responsibility of parents and educators in schools to work diligently to train and instill empathy in young children.

Another characteristic of the highest form of character is a pure interest in goodness. If a person loves goodness, they will take pleasure in doing good. Love generates desire, not just obligation.

Self-control is the ability to regulate, guide, and provide direction in the form of actions within oneself to achieve positive outcomes. In other words, self-control is a form of emotional regulation within the human psyche.

In facing various situations and conflicts, sometimes a person may find it difficult to control themselves. There are many ways individuals handle these issues. Some confront them with a calm, patient attitude, maintaining a cool head. However, others may address them emotionally, letting out all their emotions, which can lead to further conflicts and complications. Therefore, self-control is necessary in individual life[19]. While humility is a moral virtue that is often overlooked, yet it is an essential part of good character. Humility is a component of self-understanding[20].

c. Moral Actions

Moral actions are the result of two aspects of character. If someone possesses quality morals in both the intellectual and emotional realms, they will have actions that, according to their knowledge, are considered right. So it is necessary to look at three other aspects of character; competence, desire, and habit[21].

1. *Moral competence*

Moral competence is the ability to translate moral considerations and ethics into moral and effective actions. For example, to resolve an issue fairly, we need practical skills like listening, discussing viewpoints without defaming someone's character, and implementing solutions acceptable to all parties. Competence also plays a role in other moral situations; for instance, to assist someone facing a difficult problem, we must be able to think and execute previously planned strategies. Handling a problem will be easier if we have prior experience helping someone facing difficulties[22].

2. *Will or Desire*

Human beings have the ability to will, feel, and think. Will is the responsibility to act on one's own, to strive on one's own, to organize on one's own, both towards oneself and towards others[23]. In other words, human will can be interpreted as effort, whether in terms of thoughts, feelings, or actions.

3. *Habit*

People with good character behave in the best possible way, faithfully, courageously, with good manners and fairness, without being tempted by opposites[21]. They often make 'good choices' unconsciously. They do things that are considered habits[24].

For this reason, as part of moral education, children need many opportunities to develop good habits and practice being good people. This means children should have many experiences of helping others, being honest, being polite, and being fair. Therefore, these good habits will always be ready to serve them even in difficult circumstances.

What virtues are most important for a strong character? Thomas Lickona argues that there are ten core virtues that every person should possess, namely: wisdom, justice, patience, self-control, love, positive attitude, hard work, sincerity, gratitude, and humility[23].

Wisdom is the primary virtue that guides all other virtues. Wisdom enables people to discern correctly, to see what truly matters in life, and to set priorities. Wisdom teaches people how to put other virtues into practice when to act, how to act, and how to balance different virtues if one conflicts with another[23][25].

Justice means respecting the rights of others, a principle that guides us to treat others as we would like to be treated equally. The principle of justice can be found in various cultures and religions around the world[26].

Patience enables a person to do what is right in the face of difficulties[27]. We need to teach children that character development is more about enduring suffering than achieving success.

Self-control is the ability aimed at self-regulation, which allows a person to influence their habits, control their desires, and wishes in proportion without excess[27]. Deviant behavior will occur if there is no self-control.

Love goes beyond justice. It provides more than the requirements of justice. Love is a willingness to sacrifice for others, such as empathy, compassion, generosity, selflessness, loyalty, patriotism, willingness, and forgiveness are virtues of love[27][28].

A positive attitude is an asset for oneself. Character strength in purpose, enthusiasm, flexibility, and humor is part of a positive attitude, while hard work is a highly necessary

virtue. There is no substitute for work in life. Hard work includes initiative, perseverance, goal setting, and diligence.

Sincerity is attached to moral principles, staying true to moral conscience, keeping promises, and holding firm to what is believed. Sincerity of heart makes a person consistent in their words and actions even in different and conflicting situations. Sincerity of heart differs from honesty, which tells the truth to others, while sincerity of heart is telling the truth to oneself[29].

Gratitude is often described as the secret to a happy life. It encourages us to count our everyday blessings, while humility is crucial in acquiring other virtues because it makes a person aware of their shortcomings and motivates them to become a better person[30].

3.2 Discussion

The word 'character' refers to the mental qualities, morals, or virtues that distinguish one person from another. Therefore, the character represents the good values found within a person and is manifested through behavior. According to educational figures, character is the spiritual values within a person that are shaped through education, experiences, sacrifices, and environmental influences, becoming intrinsic values that underlie attitudes and behaviors. Because character must be realized through inculcated moral values to become intrinsic values within oneself that will underpin attitudes and behaviors, character doesn't come naturally but must be formed, nurtured, and built.

Character education is the education of human moral values that are consciously recognized and practiced through real actions. In character education, there is an element of the process of shaping values and attitudes based on an understanding of why these values are upheld. All consciously recognized and practiced moral values aim to help individuals become more complete human beings. These values are intended to help people live better together with others and with their world towards perfection. These values encompass various aspects of life, such as relationships with others, oneself, living in a community, the natural world, and the divine. The cultivation of moral values involves cognitive elements (thoughts, knowledge, awareness), affective elements (feelings), and psychomotor elements (behavior).

Character is the attribute or traits that shape and differentiate an individual's attributes, ethical characteristics, and mental complexities, whether on an individual, group, or national level. As the identity or essence of a nation, character represents the foundational values of behavior that serve as a reference for the norms of interaction among human beings. Universally, the types of character are formulated as the values of living together based on pillars such as peace, respect, cooperation, freedom, happiness, honesty, humility, compassion, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance, and unity.

Character can be defined as one's nature, inner qualities, morals, or virtues that distinguish someone from others. Character is a trait ingrained in the soul that leads to actions without conscious thought. Character is the mental quality, morals, or virtues that become a distinctive feature of an individual or a group of people. Shaping character is not as easy as giving advice, not as simple as giving instructions, but it requires patience, habituation, and repetition.

So, someone with character is not just a good person, but they are also capable of using those values of goodness through a fighting spirit to achieve noble goals set before them. Therefore, 'character' is different from 'temperament'.

Two factors influence character formation: innate qualities within the child and the child's view of the world, including their knowledge, experiences, moral principles acquired, guidance, direction, and interactions with parents. The character formation process begins with the personal qualities of the mother and father as influential figures who serve as role models, examples, and idols for their children. The daily attitudes and behaviors of parents constitute ongoing, continuous moral education throughout the child's developmental journey.

Character education is the education that develops good character in students, teaching values and making decisions by proper conduct. This relates to human relationships as well as their relationship with the divine. More specifically, the concept of character education is a form of learning process that prioritizes students or adults in schools with the aim of understanding, caring for, and acting by ethical values such as respect, justice, virtue, and responsibility towards oneself and others.

So from the explanation above, it can be concluded that character education is the process of guiding to students to become complete individuals with character in the dimensions of heart, mind, body, emotion, and will. Character education can also be understood as values education, moral education, ethics education, and character education aimed at developing students' ability to make good decisions wholeheartedly in everyday life.

4 Conclusion

Several important conclusions about character development education can be drawn from the above description. Character development education is crucial for the formation of a civilized and morally upright Indonesian society and, more importantly, for the development of individuals' identities in daily interactions. Second, character development and education are processes that are actively pursued by all parties involved through well-thought-out, methodical, and ongoing efforts in every sphere of life, particularly in educational institutions like schools and universities. According to Thomas Lickona, the character cannot be developed easily or calmly; it can only be developed through experiences, trials, and challenges. Through these, one's spirit can be strengthened, visions can be clarified, aspirations can be inspired, and success can be attained. Thirdly, it is the moral obligation and responsibility of every member of society, the country, and the state, including teachers and other educational professionals in both formal and informal education, as well as leaders at all levels, to comprehend, embrace, and put into practice fundamental ethical principles in their own lives and within society at large. Building a respectable and civilized nation depends on doing this.

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