

# Character Education Practice in Primary School in Bali

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**Abstract**— This study aims at describing how elementary class teachers plan, implement, and assess character values as advocated by the Indonesian Department of Education and Culture. The subjects were 5 class teachers and 162 students from 5 pilot public primary schools located in Bali, Indonesia. The data collection employed document study, classroom observation, and interview with teachers. The findings reveal that teachers explicitly stated the character values to be covered in their lesson plans, however, the values did not consistently appear either explicitly or implied during the teaching and learning activities. The teaching of characters were found to be mainly in the level of knowledge and not much in the level of feeling and not evident in the level of action. This study revealed the need for appropriate model for character education in primary schools in Bali, Indonesia.

**Keywords**—character, education, assessment, Balinese, cultural

## I. INTRODUCTION

Character has been widely accepted as one of the key factors for success in life [1], and is believed to be not something a child is born with. Every individual has gone through life experiences and education that shape their being as an individual person and also as a part of a community. They develop moral and ‘ethical fiber’ that is reflected in attitudes, behaviors, motivation, and skills [2]. As an individual, one’s good character is reflected in attitudes and behaviors that are in conformity with the ethical rules and social norms, while as part of a community, someone with good characters is judged through the value system, standard, and temperament that are compatible to harmonious interaction and socialization with others. Both are considered very important elements to establish a good citizen of a country [3]. According to Garmo [1], characters may not be permanent but maybe stronger or weaker in different situation, and they can be taught and trained to be more consistent. It is widely believed that good education system directly contributes to the development of both competencies and characters.

Definition of character education is quite open since the emphasis could be on moral, ethics, or social norms that have direct and indirect impacts on attitudes and behaviors of a person. One of the widely accepted definition emphasizes on the procedures of the teaching, practicing, and modelling “essential personal and civic life habits and skills that are almost universally understood as making people good human beings” [4]. This definition clearly reveals the setting (i.e. school facilitated by a teacher), and the goal (i.e. good manner). Research found that schools have significant

contribution in cultivating children’s character through formal education [1], [6], [4], [7].

Every country in the world has put much concern about how characters should be taught to the young generation so that they become responsible citizen and positively contribute to their community, promote a democratic way of living, and respectful to others [2]. Research found that it is relatively easier to teach children to become smart than to teach students to become ‘good’ [6]. This is probably because school subjects can be taught with standardized procedures with a wide variety of fun strategies that can be used by the teacher in teaching, while in teaching characters, a teacher should have a good imagination and creativity to decide on natural strategies to teach targeted values and demonstrate examples of good manners continuously. It is possible that assessing character development is more challenging than assessing academic development since the strategies for the latter are abundantly available and relatively easier to carry out.

In Indonesia, character education has attracted very serious attention just in the last decade as the results of the national concern about moral degradation of the young generation of the country. In 2010 the government launched the grand design of character education that was implemented in National Action Plan (hereafter, NAP). There are three stages of NAP: First, the stage of consolidation and fundamental introduction (2010-2014); second, the stage of strategies of implementation (2015-2019); third, the stage of sustainable development (2020-2014). The plan is made explicit in the school curricula in which character is introduced as the process of knowing, practicing, and habituating the notion of good [8]. Previously, the teaching of character was considered adequately done through moral education, religion study, and civic education. The result of this approach to teaching character was not considered successful as the impact was only on the level of ‘knowing’. The stage of consolidation and fundamental introduction includes the decision on the bases of character education in Indonesia. There are three main reference for the standard values to be included, namely: philosophical, theoretical, and empirical perspectives. Philosophically, character education in Indonesia refers to the countries ideology (i.e. Pancasila), the constitution, and the education system. Theoretically, it refers to the principles of pedagogy, psychology, social and cultural aspects. Empirically, the decision on character values to be included in the curriculum refers to successful and practical practice of character education in the community. In the beginning stage of NAP in 2010, there were 20 values that were suggested to be taught to school children. This comprises religious attitudes, self-confidence,

obedient to social norms, respect diversity, logical thinking, creative thinking, critical and innovative thinking, independence, strong nationalism, supportive, responsibility, politeness, honesty, discipline, hardworking, democratic, social and environmental care, being curious, having entrepreneurship mind, and self-directed. This number was reduced from 30 values that were announced to be inserted in the curriculum of international-standard pilot schools in 2006. When Curriculum 2013 was launched, the number of values was reduced to 18.

In the stage of implementation, massive in-service trainings for teachers had been conducted in an attempt to equip them with knowledge and skills regarding character education in the school. This strategy was assumed to be the most appropriate since teachers are considered as the most important profession who can help the acceleration of the growth of good characters of the young generation in the context of formal education [5], [9], [7], [10]. In informal context, character education may occur incidentally in the closest environment of a child and is nurtured by the social characters. Social characters refer to attitudes, behaviors, norms, and values that the members of the society believe to be good [11]. These are exposed to children daily life so that they learn to behave based on what they observe or experience. In Indonesia, however, the implementation stage has not so far reached the manipulation or establishment of social system regarding character education. In other words, there has not been any consistency between character education in schools and the community. As a matter of fact, failure in character education is often caused by the inconsistency approach between the values or norms exposed in schools and community [12].

Considering that character education has been a global trend [13], there are two approaches that have been practiced in schools all around the world. First, character education may occur concurrently with the school subjects. In this approach, a school establish a system in which all teachers have consistent strategies in planning, implementing, and assessing standard values into their lessons. Second, character education may become a subject of its own. In this approach, a school has an exclusive curriculum for character education course. Both approaches surely aim at supporting the basic major goal of education, that are, to make young generation to become smart as well as good [13]. Policy makers in education put substantial efforts in establishing a systematic pedagogical practice that aims at facilitating the development of moral, ethics, and values of individual students so that they have good/right attitudes and behaviors and became harmonious parts of the community or a nation [4],[1], [6]. They create a system of educational intervention to the young generation of a nation to help them become a good citizen. Every country, (needless to say, including Indonesia) has its own policy regarding the model of character education practices in the formal educational institutions. This is because all countries have a big concern about establishing a safe, peaceful, and harmonious life of their citizens.

Inserting character values into every lesson has been a popular approach because character values fit into any topics and subjects [14]. The practice requires a teacher to be able to design class activities creatively to achieve the twin goals of education: intellectual and character development. In other

words, education should develop students' competencies in the school subjects and at the same time develop their strong positive character by also working collaboratively with the administrators and parents to make the character-based instruction a success [15]. The teachers are expected to be role models who could reflect positive values within and beyond classroom activities [16]. In other words, the teacher should become good examples for the students first, and then the students learn from those examples [17]. Learning from real positive examples from adults (especially teachers) has been considered as the most effective way for school children [18]. Research found that primary school age children are the most potential age to shape one's language competencies, thinking skills, as well as character building, and they learn mostly from their teachers [19], [20], [21], [22], [23]. Teachers, therefore, should carefully plan their lesson to make sure that the lesson achieve both competencies in the school subject and character development [24]. An insertion of character values into a lesson plan may be done either by adding or modifying learning steps, indicators, and assessment [25].

In addition to creativity in designing class activities, a character-based instruction requires the choice and implementation of teaching media and strategies for students' engagement so that the characters values are not only in the level of 'moral knowing' but also 'moral feeling'. It was advisable that character education should go through the steps of knowing, feeling, and action [26], [27]. Further, it was advised that to follow these steps, students should be involved in engaging activities such as: discussion, collaborative activities, experiential activities, role play, reading literature, storytelling, and inviting community experts. The use of learning media is also needed to make the feeling of the values stronger. The media here may be one or a combination of pictorial stories, pictures coloring, tales, puppets, music, and drama [28]. Another popular approach in character-based instruction is the employment of children literature which involves reading stories that are rich of moral values and examples of good / positive characters [12], [29], [30]. It is also very likely that audio visual media, such as movie, attract students' attention and activate their logical and critical thinking through moral dilemmas [31]. Movie watching is not only fun but also easier to follow up with discussion, problem solving, and decision making that cultivate their moral knowing and feeling. Movies can help them focused and easier to understand the hidden message of the moral values from which they learn proper manner and attitude [32]. From this, it is not difficult to imagine that schools should have rich character-based instruction resources, including literary reading and learning media [33], and dedicated teachers to achieve the twin goals of education [34]. This study aims to describe how school teachers in public primary schools plan, implement, and assess character education.

## II. METHODS

This study employed the descriptive qualitative design involving 5 teachers and 162 students of Grade 5. These teachers came from 5 different public pilot elementary schools, each of which represents a region in the province of Bali, Indonesia. The data were collected through document study (of 20 lesson plans prepared by the ten teachers),

classroom observation, questionnaires, and interview with teachers. The analysis of character values was made from the teachers' lesson plans and in class teaching and learning process. A structured observation was conducted involving 8 times classroom observation in each school. A video recorder was used to record the whole instructional processes to investigate how teachers integrate character values into their lessons. The data from the observations include pictures, videos, and field note and were analyzed by describing the findings related to character education practices. In addition, semi structured interviews following the list of questions were conducted to teachers. The overall data were analyzed by employing the procedures of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion [35]. Methodological triangulation involving document study, observations, and interviews used in this study to assure the trustworthiness of the data.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first data set analyzed was the number of character values that appeared or explicitly stated in the 20 lesson plans made by the ten teachers. It was found that in every lesson plan, 5 to 7 values were explicitly mentioned in the indicators. For example, in Science Class, there were three basic competencies for the theme of humans' and animals' organ. The first one was specifically to address character values that must be inserted as follows: "Students can demonstrate scientific attitudes (curious, objective, accurate, careful, open-minded, responsible, and care of environment) in daily activities as the results of inquiry based learning and discussions". This targeted competency should be made operational in the lesson plan so that the teacher could facilitate the students to achieve this in the thematic lesson. The second and third basic competencies were respectively aimed at achieving cognitive and skills aspects: "identifying text about organs of humans and animals and its function in written and spoken language by choosing the new vocabulary by the help of teacher and peers", and "presenting text about parts of humans and animals' body and their functions in written and spoken language individually". The analyses of the 20 lesson plans found that the number of values explicitly stated ranged from 11 to 14 as seen in the following table.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF CHARACTER VALUES APPEAR/IMPLIED IN THE LESSON PLANS

Character Education Practices	Sc1 (n=30)	Sc2 (n=33)	Sc3 (n=32)	Sc4 (n=38)	Sc5 (n=29)
Number of values inserted	11 (61%)	12 (66.7%)	14 (77.8%)	11 (61%)	12 (66.7%)
Strategies to assess	A	N/A	A	N/A	A

Note: Sc=School, A= Available, N/A= Not Available

The above data revealed the number of standard values inserted into the lesson plans was at the range between 61% - 77.8%. This means that primary school teachers had attempted to plan the 'considered relevant character values' to be implemented in the classroom. The interview with the teachers indicated that the character values were adjusted

with the learning objectives and indicators, as well as the class activities the students were gone through in achieving the lesson objectives. The types of relevant characters values were assumed by every teacher so that for teaching the same topic, different teachers may insert different values.

The number/types of values inserted in lesson plans may not the same as what were implemented in the classroom. The followings are the values covered in the class activities with reference to the lesson plans discussed above. For example, in one lesson plan the teacher mentioned the value of honesty to be inserted in the activity. However, no indication was observed before, during, or after the lesson that indicate the attempt to imply moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior of honesty [26], [27]. The following table is the summary of the results analysis of both the lesson plans and the implementation in class.

TABLE 2. CHARACTER VALUES APPEAR/IMPLIED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Character Education Practices	Sc1 (n=30)	Sc2 (n=33)	Sc3 (n=32)	Sc4 (n=38)	Sc5 (n=29)
Number of values implied/implemented	14 (77.8%)	11 (61%)	12 (66.7%)	14 (77.8%)	13 (72%)
Strategy to assess	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Overall, during the 8 weeks of observation and analysis, more values appeared or implied in the teaching and learning process (71.06%) than it is in the plan (66.64%). This means that teachers attempted to address the character values as advised by the Ministry of Education and culture in their lesson plan. When it comes into the classroom, the teachers' improvisation to the plan resulted in the coverage of more character values. However, those plans were not consistently executed in the teaching and learning process. It was evident that the implementation did not cover one or two values that have been planned previously. New values may appear out of plan. The table also reveals that 60% of the teachers planned the assessment methods in the lesson plan, however, when it came into the implementation, not all teachers seemed to follow up the instruments. In other words, there was no clear method has been demonstrated in assessing the character values covered in the lessons.

To assess the development of students' characters, presumably teachers just simply need to put a tick in the appropriate box of the rubrics that shows students' observable characters. However, the inclusion of the rubrics into the lesson plan did not seem to be of effective use, for some reasons. First, it was not easy in reality to identify which character values were demonstrated by a student while they were in class. Second, classes were usually very dynamic that teacher would not have adequate time to watch every single individual. Third, not all values could be observed, especially in a short time duration of instruction. It is evident that what planned are not always put into practice during the teaching and learning process. The values that consistently appear in the planning and implementation across schools are: religious, hardworking, curious,



independent, and responsible. It means that all teachers considered those five values are the most important (if not the easiest) to be developed in the classroom. These were confirmed by the teachers in the interview. Religious manner is considered as the top priority, all lesson plans as well as the teaching and learning processes start with religious activity (i.e. praying). Praying is done twice during the day, at the beginning and at the end of the lesson. The other four values are considered of equally important and also always appear in both lesson plan and implementation. These are relevant to the task assignment to the student in which they are required to work hard, curious, independent, as well as responsible.

Overall, in the five schools observed, the following character values appeared in the lesson plans and observable during the teaching and learning process with differing frequency of occurrences.

TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF CHARACTERS INSERTED ACROSS THE FIVE SCHOOLS

No	Core Values	LP	I	A
1.	Religious manner	✓	✓	✓
2.	Confidence	✓	✓	✓
3.	Patriotic manner	✓	-	✓
4.	Responsibility	✓	✓	✓
5.	Accuracy	✓	✓	✓
6.	Independence	✓	✓	✓
7.	Reading habit	✓	✓	✓
8.	Creativity	✓	-	✓
9.	Hard working	✓	✓	✓
10.	Communicative	✓	✓	✓
11.	Tolerance	✓	✓	✓
12.	Curiosity	✓	✓	✓
13.	Honesty	✓	✓	✓
14.	Respectfulness	✓	✓	-
15.	Discipline	✓	✓	-
16.	Democratic	✓	✓	-
17.	Peacemaker	-	-	-
18.	Care with social being	-	-	-
19.	Care with environment	-	-	-

Note: LP = Lesson Plan, I = In-class instructional process, A= Assessed by the teacher

In addition to the five most frequently taught values mentioned above, other values may be observable even though they were not in the lesson plans. Most of the time, it was observable that students work in groups to fulfil the tasks (students work in collaboration, from which the value of respect, and independence, confidence, communicative may be developing). Learning were also supported with pictures and tables, however those were mostly available in the thematic book. Students were put into groups of 4s and were requested to compare pictures, describe similarities and differences, and discover new things. The following is the example of pictures from the book.



Fig. 1 Picture from the book

During the discussion, students were given a task that require them to work in groups outside of the classroom. The teacher guided the students to refer to the tables in the book before they started the group activities. Referring to the table, students were requested to find the characteristics and examples of living organism and non-living components by doing an observation around the school premises (i.e. values of independence and responsibility may be developing). During the activity, the teacher observed the students and made sure that they kept their voices low so that they did not disturb the other classes. Out of 8 lessons observed in the 5 schools, most (90%) of the activities occurred in classical class activities. In other words, most of the time students worked in groups to do tasks and teachers explained, led class discussions, and checked how well every group achieved the task requirement. All the five teachers from the five pilot primary schools in Bali shared much in common. First, they used the same (only one) thematic book provided by the Ministry of national education. This book was specifically developed to encounter the expectation of the new curriculum in primary schools in Indonesia in general, or in Bali in particular. Second, all teachers employed classroom activities that very closely followed the thematic book page by page and almost no page was skipped. Thus, students work in groups of 4s when the instructions in the book said so. Third, all the teacher wrote a lesson plan for every theme and their lesson plans followed closely the sample provided by the government (which also reflected the content of the thematic book). In one way, the characters seemed to be taught through collaboration, inquiry and discovery learning, which surely required students to collaborate, discuss, inquire and discover [26], [27]; however, on the other way, there was no creativity on the part of the teacher to create something beyond the book. Thus the teachers did not give adequate examples for students to develop the feeling of the importance to be honest, creative, democratic, responsible, and so forth. This is against the principle that teachers are the most important figure as well as the role model for character development of the students [5], [9], [7], [10].

There was no occasion observed in which teachers read stories to their students or watched movies. As a matter of fact, stories are very rich with example of moral values and examples of good characters [12], [29], [30]. Similarly, they were no supplementary teaching media provided by the teacher in addition to pictures, tables and diagrams available from the book. Based on the interview data, the teachers felt that they had the responsibility to develop students' good character by giving examples of the standard values. The

examples observed were mostly within the area of polite words and expressions (i.e. use of polite language). It is observable that the teachers occasionally reminded the students to be polite, respectful, responsible, work hard, and discipline. What the teacher did here was meant to guide students to possess moral action. However, as the observation and interview indicated, the character education practice as explained above was mainly in the level of 'knowing' and not so much of feeling, and was rather 'pushed' to the level of action.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Character education in public primary schools in Bali seems to be 'on the way' (needless to say, struggling) to find appropriate approaches and models. From the lesson plans analyzed, teachers have attempted their efforts to recognize which values to be inserted to which themes. This is proven from the implementation which sometimes was not as planned. The basic competencies in the syllabus of Grade 5 explicitly state the targeted values in every theme, however, when it comes to the real implementation, the teachers almost entirely relied on the thematic book provided by the government. Teachers tend to follow every page of the book, consequently students were mostly instructed by the book, not the teachers. As the results, teachers who are supposed to be the model for the students to develop their character are not functioning very well. Thus, to the question "how much character is there in a character-based instructions" in primary school in Bali, the answer is "much of moral knowing" since the teacher kept on reminding the students to be good. However, there is not much in "moral feeling" because the activities mainly about doing the tasks and small discussions with peers and teachers. There is hardly "moral action" since habituation of good characters is not seen during the study. Teachers did not seem to have a reward system that can strengthen the knowing into action. This study was limited on the phenomena in Grade 5 in five pilot public elementary schools in Bali. This then represents a small population of Balinese primary schools that comprise public and private, rural and urban, pilot and regular schools. Needless to say, this study did not cover a wider scope of cultural differences of the areas. Further study need to address this wider scope so that the findings can be more generalizable.

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