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## LEARNING MATERIALS IN CHARACTER EDUCATION (The Analysis of the Sociology Teaching at the Senior High School Banda Aceh, Indonesia)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Abubakar and <sup>3</sup>Anwar

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### Abstract

*Since in 1976, sociology officially became one of the subjects taught in senior high school programs throughout Indonesia. There are still several major problems in teaching it in particular the lack of locally relevant teaching materials and the lack of teachers with a background in sociology. The aim of this study is to find better ways for the teaching of sociology and for students to learn the principles of sociology and to find the best of teaching materials available for constructing a better paradigm for character education and also to identify the various barriers and difficulties inhibiting the provision of highly successful character education through the study of sociology. Most of the results showed that in teaching sociology in Banda Aceh the implementation of teaching character based on local wisdom has major problems and obstacles. In particular the standardized national education program ending with standardized national final examinations emphasizes rote learning unrelated to the real life of the students. This raises contradictions because the centrally prepared material makes it difficult to introduce local indigenous values, culture and traditions.*

**Keywords:** *Communication, Competence, Transformational, Leadership, Across Cultures*

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<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Serambi Mekkah University, Banda Aceh Indonesia. E-mail: [abubakar\\_ajalil@yahoo.com](mailto:abubakar_ajalil@yahoo.com)

<sup>3</sup> Serambi Mekkah University, Banda Aceh Indonesia

## **A. Introduction**

The Province of Aceh is a special area (in Indonesia) with much potential, both natural and social, which also has much local wisdom in accordance with Sharia Islam laws and values. The same is true for the City of Banda Aceh, the capital city of the province, which has expressed a vision to become a spiritual city based on Islamic sharia law. To achieve that vision will need efforts from many people in particular teachers able to train students in Islamic values. Teaching and leading by example in the schools is needed to ensure the upcoming young generations are fully trained and inculcated to practice the local wisdom.

One important subject for study which can assist to reach these goals is the study of sociology. Sociology, however is often looked at as just a filler subject, in fact sociology is only offered as part of the IPS or social studies curriculum (not as part of the IPA or science curriculum). Often people think of the IPS group of students as the group that is not so clever and sometimes maybe not so diligent.. As a result a paradigm has developed with a dichotomy between the IPA and the IPS students whereby the IPA group is regarded as budding intellectuals and prioritized whilst the IPS students are regarded as second rate. As a result teaching without thinking, follows this character dichotomy.

## **B. Method**

This is a qualitative research. The respondents are all, every one of the High School sociology teachers in the City of Banda Aceh together with other associated persons thought to have knowledge in the area of the problems being studied and/or data that is relevant to this study like sociology experts and leaders of traditional culture. The methods used for gathering data were in-depth interviews, real time observations and document searches. While the data collected will be analyzed using qualitative methods triangulation. The aim of the analysis was to outline categories which are relevant to the purpose of the study in order to give better research results.

### **C. Research Finding and Discussion**

Sociology is a new subject for study in Indonesia. First entering school curricula in 1994, the aims and means of study have been developing continuously in accordance with the vision for education in Indonesia – viz: to develop character in accordance with Section 3 of (Indonesian) Law No 20 of 2003. Remembering that the Republic of Indonesia has 1,128 different cultural groups occupying different places in the innumerable islands of the Indonesian archipelago each with it's own character, the study (of Sociology) needs to be adjusted to take account of the local culture so that the results of their studies will be of benefit for the students when they return to their communities.

There are many problems for sociology teachers to overcome in order to teach the values of character in accordance with those set down in the national curriculum whilst at the same time incorporating local customary values and wisdom. These problems are not just with the teachers themselves but also with the text-books, the curriculum and the teaching modules which are not yet in accordance with the hoped for lesson ideals. Indeed some problems even stem from government regulations themselves. Based on research in the City of Banda Aceh in 2013, the writer has tried to outline some of these problems in the sections that follow:

#### **1. Problems in the Implementation and Application of Character Values in High Schools in Banda Aceh City.**

Based on the results and analysis of the various data collected these problems can be summarized as follows:

##### **a. Difficulties with Regulations and Standards for Measurement**

According UU. Sisdiknas No. 20/2003, concerning the National Education System states that the purpose of National Education is directed and is aimed so that the students can actively develop their personal potential to possess spiritual strength, self control, individuality, noble character, intelligence and skills. Clearly, according to what is outlined in that law, education is not just aimed at making students clever in an academic sense but is aimed at making human beings that are

wholesome, who are capable of serving our creator, human beings who will dedicate themselves to humanity and the global environment.

Taking special note of this statement of purpose the direction of development of teaching needs to pay attention to various characteristics which cannot be separated from local wisdom as the place where the students adapt and live with their families. Note that the pressures of teaching are decentralist in nature while, on the other hand, the decision to implement standardized nationwide testing in the UN (National End-of-Academic Year Exams held in April-May) which emphasized cognitive aspects only is contradictive because of its centralistic nature.

The two opposing directions can create confusion for teachers trying to teach. On the one hand, (from the Education Department) there is an emphasis on using teaching materials which are locally based whilst on the other hand the government (read the Education Department again) insists on standardized national teaching materials whereby the teachers are expected to drive the students to achieve the highest possible results in the NU using the nationally based materials provided men while each region and even each area has its own distinctive and different characteristics.

Besides this there is a feeling of failure and even of "self-punishment" for teachers if many of their students fail the National exams in a subject which that teacher is taking. Hence the performance of the teacher concerned is believed to be poor. In this situation the moral values of the teacher are tested between being honest and assisting in cheating. This is because, in Indonesia, the percentage and level of passes in the National exams has become the measure for assessing the standard of the school. (viz: a high level of passes gives a school higher prestige). This situation can smear character values because there is no culture amongst the people where cheating' is regarded as a good sign of character.

From this phenomena many points arise which can become problems because:

- 1) Many teachers are confused in teaching because they have a dual role viz: the purpose of teaching is to develop character in accordance with the local wisdom of the people whilst at the same time the students are required to pass the centralistic national exams

as an indicator of the success of the students, the teachers and the school as well as the success of any other directorates concerned.

- 2) The “punishment’ which the teacher and the school will receive if many students fail the National Exams the teachers automatically have to focus their teaching on the materials needed to pass the National exams rather than any locally based materials.
- 3) The growth of bad values like cheating, buying and selling of answers and other dishonesty - even though the school is an institution which must guard good values, the need to pass the National exams causes pressures to support bad actions.

The materials tested are not synchronous with the aims of the National constitution and with laws for National education, because the national examination is only concerned with intellectual cleverness. Intellectual ability certainly does not guarantee the equality and ability of people because it is not connected with the work ethic or with the (social & natural) environment.

**b. Teachers of Sociology in Banda Aceh have no background in Sociology**

In Banda Aceh the teachers are still the factor that determines the success of the lessons and the ability to achieve the learning goals. The success of students depends very much on the teacher’s performance in class. In the classes the students are still not sufficiently independent to manage the conditions of the classes themselves. If the teacher is not in the class, the students can often make a big row that can disturb neighboring classes hence the role of the teacher is very important to manage the behavior of students in their classes.

For the study of sociology in Banda Aceh there is not yet one teacher who is specifically trained in sociology. 100% of the teachers, teaching Sociology in the High Schools in Banda Aceh have no training in Sociology or some other relevant discipline e.g. Anthropology.

**c. There is not yet any special training for teachers to teach sociology**

Training is one way to improve teaching performance in a sustainable way; ideally training should be given at least once a year; this is important given the continuous and rapid development of science and technology and even of social sciences. Teaching methods also need to follow new



developments in science and technology; relevant new developments need to be mastered by teachers in order to improve their teaching methods.

Although we are sure that in-service training is important to maintain and improve the performance of teachers up until now the sociology teachers have not had any regular or systematic in-service training (i-s t). Teachers from other disciplines are nearly all in the same boat; although teachers of other disciplines have had some i-s t. it has not been enough to come near to ideal. That is far from the case with sociology teachers - they were given some minor i-s training in sociology by IKIP (teaching institute) in 1985 and the next was after the Tsunami in 2006, the latter was paid for by foreign NGOs.

As mentioned above, the high school teachers tasked with teaching sociology in Banda Aceh don't have a background in sociology but come from all kinds of backgrounds as a result the sociology teaching is highly varied depending on the competency of the individual teachers, their understanding of the teaching materials, their artistry in teaching and their ability to do research into sociology especially their ability to do research and collaboration into local character, traditions and customs.

The need for In-service training in sociology for sociology teachers in Banda Aceh is very important for multiple reasons including to:

- 1) Improve the ability of the teachers to teach sociology;
- 2) Increase the teachers ability to incorporate local wisdom, character and values into their teaching of sociology
- 3) To make the materials, models and methods of teaching sociology uniform in accordance with the characteristics, principles and purposes of teaching about character in sociology.
- 4) Develop research models to provide local materials for teaching sociology.

#### **d. Sociology Teachers have dual roles (multiple roles)**

As mentioned above none of the teachers at present teaching sociology in Banda Aceh high schools had any background in sociology. They were all directed to assist with teaching sociology in addition to teaching their other specialty subjects at other times usually in accordance

with their basic training. This dual role increases their work load and can make the teachers feel uncomfortable (in their dual role).

This dual role can also create an imbalance in their professional duties. The teachers will naturally give top priority to the teaching of their own specific subject whilst the teaching of sociology will get second place in their priorities. The dual role can even create stress for the teachers because on the one hand they have to be professional and teach their specific subjects (that they have been trained to teach) whilst on the other hand they have to be professional and teach sociology for which they have had no training. According to Briner (Rahayu Apriliaswati, 2014), this kind of stress can be called internal stress he characterizes as *Openness to Experience*.

**e. The teaching materials supplied for sociology are not appropriate**

The sociology teaching materials i.e., books supplied from the central government education department are not appropriate for specific cultural groups like the Acehnese (the materials supplied were prepared for a megalopolis where the dominant culture is Javanese). In general these materials are not appropriate.

Our research showed that all the sociology teachers still used books supplied as part of the national teaching packet so that it is still difficult to introduce local wisdom, values and culture as part of the sociology teaching materials. As a result there is a discontinuity: what is in the teaching materials is not representative of the culture outside the schools and what is in the culture around the schools is not in the teaching materials.

The materials for teaching sociology have specific cultural characteristics – this is quite different from other social sciences: this characteristic is not well understood by teachers not trained in sociology. Sociology is quite different from other sciences like anthropology, history, economics etc. That there is not yet a book for teaching sociology specifically for the Acehnese is a difficulty for the teachers assigned to teach sociology in Banda Aceh.

The teaching materials available for teaching sociology in Banda Aceh are nationally based having come from the national packet of materials for teaching sociology. They are oriented to a Javanese megalopolis and are not appropriate for a minor city with a specific culture in a province that has chosen to introduce Islamic Sharia law.



**f. The Acehese people and the parents of the students have not yet been involved in compiling local wisdom, culture and values**

Parents of students are an important element to support education. Parents must understand that they have the prime responsibility for the education of their children in accordance with their (the parents) values.

Nowadays many parents no longer take notice of the education that their children receive at school. For various reasons including not enough time they leave the schooling of their teenagers to their schools, the parents tend to only feel responsible for providing their teenagers with a home and paying for whatever has to be paid for. In the various models (for school governance) there appears to be no opportunity for the parents to be involved in the education of their teenagers; in fact these difficulties may have been made by the schools themselves which have not created formats (for school governance) which make it possible for parents to be involved in the programs of the schools.

**2. Teaching to develop Character based on Local Wisdom, Culture and Traditional Values**

To maximized the teaching of character in schools all stakeholders must be involved, including the teachers themselves, viz.: the curriculum units, the teaching processes and the evaluations as well as the various equipment needed, the quality of relationships, the handling and management of the teaching units, the school management, the programming of activities including co-curriculum activities, the empowerment to make available necessary infrastructure, the funding and cash flows, and the work ethic of all the people in the school environment who are responsible must be coordinated and actively play their roles according to their respective functions.

Considering all these components our study found that in Banda Aceh High Schools implementation of teaching about character using local wisdom has not yet taken root and there are no concrete plans from all the actors in the school environment to improve the teaching of character especially using values from local wisdom.

Many in education do not yet understand the special characteristics needed for teaching sociology and have not yet mastered how to make plans

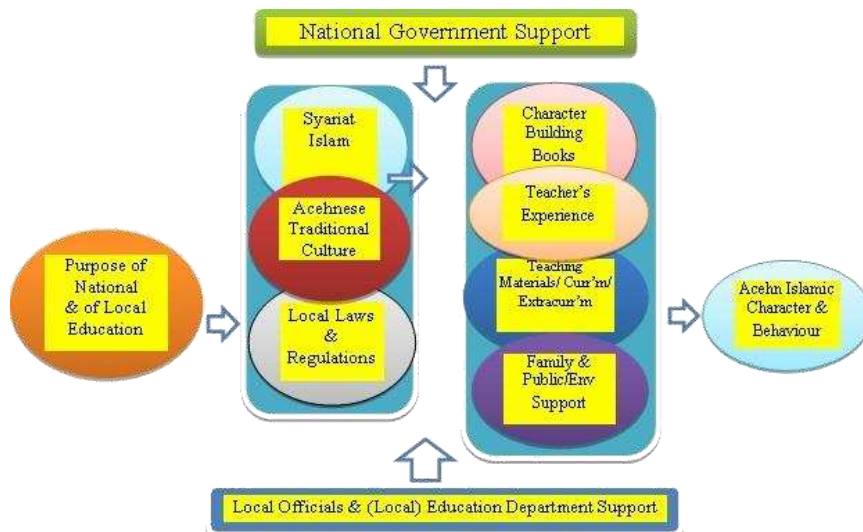
for teaching sociology and character based on local wisdom and values; these needs need to be understood and followed by all parties concerned as a guide to living for the people which is integrated in the lessons at the schools.

What has been done up till now is what has been done for a long time, using materials which are very generalized from nationally produced books. Most of the teachers don't yet understand about local materials that could be included in the teaching of sociology in their schools. This can be seen as many of the young generation now spend their time doing things of no benefit, viz: sitting around in cafes. Previously this was only done by young men, now it's increasingly being done by young women too. Beatings and even murders, extortion, apostasy (change of religion), bribery, corruption and nepotism wherever there is an opportunity, buying, selling and copying of theses, plagiarism, cheating in the National exams, smoking (now being copied by young ladies whilst previously it was very taboo), drug addiction and promiscuity are now being done by many teenage high school students in Banda Aceh (2, 46% have even had *free sex*, Abu Bakar, dkk. 2010). Recent studies show that 10% of the prostitutes in Banda Aceh are teenagers either still in high school or who have dropped out.

Academically the teaching of character is the teaching of values, the teaching of common sense, the teaching of morals and the teaching of good personality the purpose of which is to develop the ability of the students to make good-bad decisions based on the values of society, to care for and maintain what is good and be capable of shaping good personal values for daily life.

From the macro view, the value of teaching character is to maintain and guard the values of national education, which is to shape people who have good values, good morals, good character, people who are responsible and people who are useful, hard working and dedicated to their families, their religion, their culture and their country. Formation of character values in class needs to be developed; ideally this would be in an overall program encompassing all subjects and taught in accordance with each field covered and integrated or embedded into all subjects.

The diagram below graphically shows how the teaching of character values is developed from local wisdom and values.



**Diagram: Relationships & Processes for Developing Education in Character based on Local Wisdom and Traditions in the City of Banda Aceh**

Every teaching activity develops abilities in the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domains. Because of that, it does not always need special lessons to teach character values based on the local wisdom and the character of the people. Nevertheless special values like, fairness = equality of opportunity, work ethic = work hard & smart, truthfulness, honesty, tolerance, discipline, sharing, charity, compassion, autonomy = independence, nationalism, love of nature and love of reading and also religious values can best be developed in special lessons designed to develop these values.

In order to develop some other values like empathy = social caring, care of the environment, curiosity, creativity and entrepreneurial initiative require special conditions to be deliberately organized together with relevant teaching modules and methods so that the students get opportunities to put into practice the values being taught, there fore synergy needed of these elements of the school to carryings character values in their teaching.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on our research results above, several important points can be drawn as conclusions in this study, amongst others:

- 1) The aim of National education is not only to create capable people with intellectual intelligence but also to develop wisdom based on good character values especially local wisdom values. The principles and characteristics needed in teaching sociology cannot be developed, without training; the teaching must also train the new teachers how to connect the sociology teaching materials with the local cultural character values and also how to do sociological research to find out and to collect material from the local people.
- 2) The sociology teachers are almost always required to teach at least one other subject so they usually have to perform multiple roles. This condition can create a work load that is not easy to cope with for the teachers themselves. Dual teaching roles like this can result in priorities which are not balanced.
- 3) Sociology materials have their own distinctive character and are different from the materials for other social sciences, this is not often understood by other teachers, accordingly when teaching it, it is difficult to say which other science is close to sociology -anthropology, history, economics- even some other sciences all have some commonalities. As there is not yet any book for teaching sociology which specifically covers the character values of the Acehnese it is difficult for the teacher of sociology in Banda Aceh to develop material for the class. The teachers of sociology in Banda Aceh are not yet able to develop material that incorporates the local wisdom of Aceh.
- 4) Parents are very important in supporting the kind of education provided in schools. Many parents don't take much notice of what their children are learning at school. The parents are also reluctant to become involved in activities at the school because they are not consulted by the school in preparing the School's programs especially for preparing the teaching materials to be used.

Academically, education to guide character is education in values, education for conduct of life, education in morals and education in attitudes. The purpose of it is develop the ability of students to make decisions based on values held by the people, to care for and maintain good moral values and to be capable of maintaining and empathizing with those good values in

daily life without any use of force. Formation of character values in class needs to be done in an overall way in every subject in accordance with its domain and integrated into each subject.

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