RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ASIA

SPIRITUAL DIVERSITY IN GLOBALIZED TIMES

Edited by
Kerry J. Kennedy and John Chi-Kin Lee

Routledge

Religious Education in Asia

This book examines ancient religious traditions and modernity in a globalized Asia that is as much in need of a moral compass as it is economic development. Religious education has been an aspect of many societies over time and irrespective of culture. Yet as globalization advances local values are challenged every day by internationalized discourses and global perspectives. It is this context that provides the rationale for this edited book. It seeks to understand what forms religious education takes in Asian contexts and what role it continues to play. On the one hand, the societies which are the subject of this book reflect ancient religious traditions but on the other they are responsible for a significant portion of the world's economic development.

The book will appeal to researchers interested in the current state of religious education in Asia, policymakers with responsibility for religious education and teachers who practice religious education on a daily basis.

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Routledge Series on Life and Values Education

Series editors: John Chi-Kin Lee and Kerry J. Kennedy

The current world order so often seems fixated on economic growth at all costs, rising and self-interested nationalism, rampant individualism, environmental minimalism and declining support for authentic inclusion and democracy based on mutual trust, respect and dialogue. This book series takes an alternative view of life primarily as a meaning making activity. It focuses on the education of young people's spiritual and religious engagement. It does so using a cross cultural approach drawing on the diverse traditions found in Asia while recognizing the importance of Western traditions that have also been significant in the region and beyond. Blending this diverse range of influences, books in the series explore the way religious and spiritual dimensions of life are adopted, integrated and practiced by schools and their communities. By so doing, it seeks to highlight an important and too often neglected dimension of life and living.

The book series adopts pluralistic and dialectical approaches to life and values education primarily, although not exclusively, situated in diversified Asian societies which cover moral education, religious and spirituality education, citizenship education as well as other kinds of values education such as education for sustainability and peace education and issues related to lifelong learning. Books will:

1 Enhance the academic dialogues within and across different Asian societies with diverse religious, philosophical and socio-cultural traditions;
2 Consolidate approaches, strategies, experiences and challenges in implementing life and values educations under Asians context and with an international perspective;
3 Suggest forward-looking agendas in research and development in life and values education.

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Religious Education in Asia

Spiritual Diversity in Globalized Times

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Series editors' note

Life, moral, character and values education have gained increasing importance and attention especially in a globalized, transnational and technological world. Increasing mobility and information exchange, growing cultural diversity and a recognized need for more emphasis on personal and professional ethics all point to the need for a greater emphasis on what this Series has called 'life and values education'. There is also some emphasis on the linkage between life planning education and the cultivation of life, transversal and generic skills in the 21st century.

Of course, this Series is not the first attempt to identify this need. Internationally, UNESCO's four pillars of learning: 'Learning to know', 'Learning to do', 'Learning to live together' and 'Learning to be' demonstrated the integrated nature of learning that brings together multiple ways of knowing. In particular, 'learning to live together' and 'learning to be' can facilitate the development of values associated with human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding, respect, peace and sustainability – key UNESCO values associated with the Sustainable Development Goals. There is little doubt that education itself is a values-laden activity and while there is a good deal of consensus related to UNESCO pillars of learning, this is not always the case with a broader range of values. Values need to be contextualized and interpreted and will often be contested because of socio-historical and cultural factors. This means they will often be controversial within and across societies!

Different people often have varying interpretations of 'values' and 'life and values education' and different societies have been influenced by different sociocultural traditions, political ideologies, media presentations and religions. This is where controversy may arise. For some people and societies, there may be more emphasis on democratic education associated with values of freedom, social justice, rights and equity, while some others may attach more importance to moral and character education as well as national education, which focus on individual cultivation of positive values and virtues such as courage, perseverance, national identity, appreciation of historical and cultural heritage, and benevolence. Since there is not 'one right way' to understand life values and values education, this Series will adopt an inclusive approach to facilitate cross-national and intercultural communication.

There are also different means and approaches to life, moral and values education that range from formal school subjects, school-based programmes as well as teachers and peers' role modelling, extra-curricular activities, school discipline, pastoral care and school ethos. At the same time these school-based approaches exist in parallel with family values, community service and support for the disadvantaged. These multiple sources of life and values education are all important but they often operate and enact in ways that are not well understood – especially the interaction that takes place between family, school, community and international values. This Series seeks to explore and better understand these multiple approaches and their impact on young people's development and engagement. In doing so, it will encourage greater cross- and inter-cultural understanding of the way different societies approach the mission and tasks of life and values education.

The purpose of this particular publication is to highlight processes of religious education as an important source of values education in different Asian contexts. The contributions will help to understand better how young people are inducted into moral, spiritual and religious ways of thinking in their unique contexts. It will complement an extensive literature on religious education in Western contexts and by so doing will expand the field of inquiry, making it more inclusive and more reflective of 21st century realities.

John Chi-Kin Lee & Kerry J. Kennedy

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1 Religion, modernities and education

Contexts for Asia's religious education

Kerry J. Kennedy and John Chi-Kin Lee

Keywords European modernity, secularization, Asian modernity, inter-referencing

Writing of new religious movements in the 20th century, Boyd (1995) made the point that "in a rapidly changing world, in which social institutions are all in flux, to religion alone is ascribed a continuing and theoretically unchanging role, function and form" (p.7). His focus, however, was not on religions in general, but on one religion in particular: Christianity. Throughout the paper he is concerned with variants of what might be called apostolic Christianity and how in some cases new movements challenge mainstream Christian views. Like many Western sociologists of religion, Boyd's frame of reference is geographically, socially and culturally bounded by an Anglo-European-North American view of religion conceived of as one form or other of Christianity. While this book does not question the historical significance of Christianity its remit is much broader: it seeks to understand how the diverse religions of Asia, which through colonial expansion also happen to include Christianity, construct their educational role, especially in relation to young people. The concern is not so much with the Religious Education (RE) lesson so common in many Western classrooms: rather, the concern is with why, how and under what circumstances Asian religions educate young people. In this book religion is always plural, always contextualized and always subject to social construction both over time and presently.

To explore the book's framework further the following issues will be discussed:

- "European modernity" and its impact on religion;
- The secularization thesis in Asian contexts;
- The distinctive nature of Asian religions and the implications for education; and
- Inter-referencing and its role in comparative education.

"European modernity" – what it means and its implications for religion

Scholarship related to what is generally referred to as "European modernity" is extensive and complex. Stråth and Wagner (2017) have pointed out that older interpretations stressed the split from religious domination, the reification of rationality over faith and the establishment of the market economy. They argued, however,

that these were not necessarily the driving forces of European development in the 19th and 20th centuries, and certainly were not the foundation of democratic development during those times. Rather development, particularly in the form of colonialism, literally took place at the "end of a barrel" reinforced by Europe's military might and greed. Accommodations were reached with religion that maintained its status, if not its influence, as in previous times. What was more, the so-called market economy was buffeted by large scale protectionism and the exploitation of colonies in Africa and Europe.

This view of European modernity seeks to deconstruct its influence and to identify other forces that were at work influencing European development. Stråth and Wagner (2017) are correct in observing that during this period religion, by which they mean Christianity, remained an important part of social practice in Europe. Yet compared to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance periods, the role of religion in Europe was fundamentally different in these later times. Religion no longer dominated society as it did during the Middle Ages. The accommodation of secular and religious organizations during the Renaissance became more marked with the acceptance of distinct spheres of authority for each. Over time religion's influence waned in Europe, but it did not totally disappear.

Yet religion's role changed fundamentally and came to be regarded largely as a private transaction between individuals and whatever transcendent being they chose. This meant the role of church authorities was confined largely to moral and spiritual issues. This transition of religion from centre stage to side stage, from political masters to private minders, is often regarded as the central achievement of what is referred to as the European Enlightenment, a movement that enshrined human autonomy, rationality, and the capacity for human beings to understand themselves from looking inwards rather than to an external being. Despite recent critiques of the Enlightenment and its influence (Peters, 2019), there is little doubt that the abandonment of deity as an explanation for all that human beings are had fundamental implications for religion. The Enlightenment is often seen to be a precursor of European modernity providing the foundation for democratic, industrial and social development. Its principles cannot be easily dismissed, as Stråth and Wagner (2017) seemed to suggest, by asserting that the influence of the church remained, since Enlightenment thinking reflects some fundamental re-thinking not just about the role of religion in society, but about the nature of human beings.

Jensen (2013, p.158) has pointed out that "since religion implies reference to an Other who precedes and defines humankind, it is entirely logical that modern thought has – at least in some of its traditions – avoided the integration of religion into its different manifestations. Tacitly or explicitly to be modern has been understood as entailing the apostasy of religion". He refers to a range of French, English and German philosophers who initiated, developed and advanced the view that religion, with its transcendent view of reality, had little or no place in the public and even the private life of citizens. It was neatly summed up by René Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum*: "I think, therefore I am" making the human subject the arbiter of his/her own destiny. There were many different ways in which this idea was expressed and as Peters (2019) pointed out there was also disagreement

with the central role given to rationality and rational thinking. Yet there is little doubt that the split from religion based on the rational capacity of human beings became a major motif from the 17th century onwards. Religion as a social practice did not disappear, but it was no longer central to public and political life and it faced constant opposition from secular and humanist thought. Jensen (2018, p.158) commented that "one of the *central crises* of Europe is the duality religious-secular." The concept of the "secular" is important and must be seen as a key characteristic of European modernity.

Deagon (2013) provided what is perhaps the most stringent view of secularism:

> Secularism can be defined as the complete separation of church and state in constitutional, legal, political, administrative and even cultural contexts. This entails the complete removal of religion from public affairs, and the preclusion of religious discussion in public discourse. Ultimately, the secularist strategy is to "purify public reason from religious arguments"
>
> (p.3)

Reinforcing this view, Casanova (2018a) has made the point that "Europeans tend to experience secularization as an historical process of religious decline, that is, of temporal and spatial supersession of the religious by the secular" (p.191). Religion and secularism in these formulations are seen to be dichotomous. Yet Berger (2014) has more recently pointed out that this dichotomy, which was so much part of Enlightenment thinking, did not eventuate in reality and that what has been achieved over time is a more realistic vision of pluralism that embraced both religion and secularism existing side by side in many, if not all, European societies. This is an important revision of what for a long time has been considered an enduring legacy of European modernity – secularism may have been unleashed by the Enlightenment, but it has not overridden religion. It has come to exist side by side with religion – most often as an opponent and often embedded in instruments of state to signal that the state itself is not dominated by religion or religious authorities. Thus, secularism can be considered as an influential idea that challenges religion but does not dominate it altogether and certainly has not eliminated it. Yet this is essentially a European phenomenon. What can be said about religion and secularism in Asian contexts?

The secularization thesis in Asian contexts

There is an extensive scholarship that has argued European modernity, and for our purposes this includes the secularization thesis, set the stage for social and economic development not just in Europe but throughout the world. Stråth and Wagner (2017), among others, dispute this view as being Eurocentric and simplistic. Yet the view has been promoted heavily through modernization theory that has suggested development is related to changes in areas such as governance, media and economic development – the kind of changes evident in much of European development. An adjunct to modernization theory is the view that as

development takes place religion becomes less important, as it appeared to from the 18th century onwards in Europe. This application of European experience to Asian contexts has been strongly disputed.

In an early critique, Clammer (1984) pointed out that "clearly the Asian situation shows that secularization is not inevitable or irreversible" (p.56). Tu (2000) went further when he asserted that "in the Western and the non-Western worlds, the projected transition from tradition to modernity never occurred. Traditions continue in modernity" (p.198). Casanova (2018a) further commented that "outside of Europe, by contrast, in much of the rest of the world, both the dynamics of confessionalization and de-confessionalization as well as the secularist stadial consciousness are usually absent" (p.191). In other words, European experience is not Asia's experience, which must be understood in its own contexts and not those of Europe, despite major colonial exploitation that sought to fashion much of Asia in Europe's image. There are three main aspects of what might be called "Asia's religious exceptionalism" when it comes to understanding the Asian religious experience.

Casanova (2018a) has argued that what characterizes Asia is religious pluralism rather than a single confessional religion such as Christianity in Europe. Almost the entire discourse about religion in Europe, at least until the current century, has been about one single religion, and from the 16th century onwards about different varieties of that religion. Catholicism and Protestantism represent the two main branches of European Christianity and within those branches there is further differentiation. Protestantism, for example, is reflected in Lutheranism, Calvinism and Anglicanism, just to name a few major strands. Catholicism has been more centralized and controlled both theologically and politically. Together, however, these represent the European conversation about religion, with secularism being a response that attempted to throw off religion's influence. Europe's story, however, is not Asia's.

Casanova (2018b) has gone further than the simplistic idea that Asia's engagement with religion is just "a different story". Focussing on East Asia, he has shown the richness of the region's pluralistic religious history. One example he provided was China, where he shows that from the earliest times Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism have grown, developed and interacted. The arrival of Christianity in the 16th century did not disturb the status quo but rather was added to Asian religious pluralism. Although hegemonic in both theology and practice, Christianity did not subdue local religions, even in the 19th century when colonialism was at its most potent. Asia's religious pluralism simply accommodated the new arrival and today this pluralism continues to reflect religious arrangements in the region.

While Casanova (2018b) focused on East Asia, Clammer (1984) developed a similar argument regarding Asia's religious pluralism, but with reference to South East Asia. Yet his analysis was somewhat more nuanced. He identified countries such as Burma, Thailand and Brunei that were characterized by single dominant religions so that the religious pluralism thesis applies across the broader region, but not necessarily to every individual country. At the same time, he classifies whether countries have a "state religion" by which he means a religion officially endorsed by the state. He lists Buddhism in Burma and Thailand, and Islam in

Malaysia and Brunei as being "state religions". By this is meant religion is intertwined with, and in some senses inseparable from politics: "…the pattern especially in Southeast and West Asia is towards the political appropriation of religion, particularly in those states where a single religion predominates" (p.54). This is another diversity that characterizes religions in Asia, making generalizations very difficult and probably unnecessary.

If religious pluralism characterizes religious engagement in East, South East and West Asia, the same can be said for South Asia as well. Hinduism and Islam exist side by side in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Historically the relationship between adherents of these two religions has not been easy, so that pluralism in itself does not guarantee tolerance or acceptance. It is disappointing to have to note, along with Reid (2015), that violence resulting from a refusal to engage with the peaceful side of religious tolerance has been a feature of the 21st century, not just in South but in South East Asia as well. The co-existence of multiple religions in Asia, therefore, has not always meant an acknowledgement of the ethics of pluralism.

Yet what of secularism or secularization in Asia? Most scholars are agreed that religious pluralism does not exclude secularism and there is evidence in different parts of Asia that secularism has been a part of the pluralist ideology (Clammer, 1984; Casanova, 2018a). This means in different countries there is likely to be a mixture of religion and secularism. Singapore, for example, encourages religious freedom amongst its multi-ethnic population but the working of the state is strictly in the secularist mode. Japan supports Shintoism as a state religion but otherwise the state apparatus works quite separately from the endorsed religion. This kind of discussion, however, is really a "European" discussion based on Enlightenment thinking that discouraged the cleavage between religion, politics and society, a cleavage not reflected in Asia. What is more, the scholars discussed above, and elsewhere, generally construct the secularist debate in European terms, even when they are arguing against the modernization thesis (for example, see Stråth & Wagner, 2017). This raises the issue of what, apart from religious pluralism, might be considered distinctive about religion in Asia.

Ironically, one response might be that in many Asian contexts religion's closeness to politics not only refutes the secularization thesis but enhances a link long thought to have been severed in Europe. Schottman (2013), for example, talks about Islam in Malaysia as a "civic religion" (p.57), "an all encompassing way of life" (p.57) seeking to influence private, social and political behaviour. Reynolds (2005) has pointed to the existence of a civic religious tradition in Thailand developed over the course of its history and expressed in the early 20th century as the integration of the nation, religion and the king. Even as the monarchy passed from its autocratic to its constitutional stage in the 1930s, this integration was retained with the King having oversight over the nation and Buddhism retained as the state religion (despite Thailand's religious pluralism) even though the King no longer had political control. In East Asia, Confucianism is usually described as a philosophical, social and moral system of thinking. Yet the US sociologist, Robert Bellah (1975), described Confucianism as a "civil religion", an idea that has considerable support from current scholarship (Fröhlich, 2017; Ming, 2014). This is

similar to the idea of a "civic religion" as referred to above. It means that religion, with its moral and social precepts, is so embedded in social and political systems that it is sometimes difficult to tell where religion ends and politics starts. Yet in another sense, Confucianism does not meet the some of the requirements for a traditional religion – it is not about transcendence, it does not talk about any state but life here on earth and it has no churches or celebrants. As has been pointed out, however, "Confucianism built on an ancient religious foundation to establish the social values, institutions, and transcendent ideals of traditional Chinese society" (Berling, 2019).

   Far from being a gap between religion and society, as happened in Europe, there is closer integration between religion and society in Asia. Even as many countries in Asia developed in line with modernization theory, religion was not discarded, as those advocates of European modernity predicted. As Clammer (1984) commented, "the Asian situation shows that secularization is not inevitable or irreversible" (p.56). Some commentators, however, are much stronger in their critique of European modernity to the point of seeing it as antithetical to Asian values systems (Hutanuwatr, 2003):

> The beliefs and values of Western modernity are fundamental to a power structure that is socially unjust and environmentally destructive, and degrading to the quality of human life
>
> (p.43)

The author goes on to argue for the importance of a Buddhist world view in constructing fair and just societies. This is an important assertion simply because it argues not just that the values of European modernity are alien in many Asian contexts but there are competing "modernities" in Asian contexts that reject the very assumption on which European modernity was based.

   Important as such an approach is, it does not take into account Casanova's (2018b) view that those Asian states that opted for communism as a form of social and political governance "institutionalized radical versions of state secularism directed against all forms of traditional religion and feudal superstition" (p.349). Ironically, of course, this was a European solution imposed on Asian contexts. What is more it was not permanent, as the subsequent development of religiosity in these contexts has shown (Van de Veer, 2014; Goossaert & Palmer, 2011). As in Europe, religion has not died out in these states (for example China and Vietnam) but continues in various forms, although very often under state supervision and scrutiny.

The distinctive nature of Asian religions and the implications for education

Because of Asia's pluralistic religious landscape, it is not possible to make generalizations about the nature of religious education. Pelupessy-Wowor (2016) identified three current models of such education: "monoreligious", "multireligious" and "interreligious" (p. 99). The first of these is similar to what might be called "religious

instruction" in a single faith tradition. The second introduces students to multiple religious traditions while the third attempts to identify how religious traditions might interact, and especially how interreligious dialogue might take place. These are helpful categories in understanding different forms of religious education even though they are essentially constructed around the way such education is taught in largely Western contexts. They assume, for example that there is a school subject called something like 'Religious Education' and that time will be devoted to it in the school curriculum. This is true of many, although by no means all, Western countries. As shown below, it also reflects what happens in some Asian societies.

In Taiwan, for example, "religious education (in terms of a confessional approach) cannot be a required course and students, according to … law, should not be forced to take part in religious activities in schools … religious education is not part of the formal curriculum in the public schools" (Ng & Chan, 2012). In Hong Kong, on the other hand, there is a Religious Education curriculum, of the multireligious type, that is made available to schools by the Curriculum Development Council, but it is not compulsory (Curriculum Development Council, 1999). Many school sponsoring bodies (SSB) in Hong Kong are religious bodies such as the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui, Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, Hong Kong Buddhist Association, Methodist Church, Hong Kong and Hong Kong Taoist Association. These SSBs tend to promote their religious values and organize respective RE programmes and activities. In the People's Republic of China constitutional provision went from "freedom of belief" in 1954 to "freedom of religious belief" in 1982 (Nanbu, 2008, pp. 224–225). Recently, the State Council Information Office released a White Paper, *China's Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief*. In addition, as of September 2017, the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) had approved 91 religious schools in China including 9 Catholic, 10 Islamic, 10 Taoist and 21 Protestant and 41 Buddhist schools (Xinhua, 2018). However, this did not include any provision for religious education in schools. Thus, across these three Chinese societies it is only in Hong Kong where the Western view of class-based RE exists. In the other two, classrooms are not sites for religious education. A similar situation exists in Korea, although there are faith-based schools where religious education does play a role in the formal curriculum (Kim, 2018). There is also a reluctance in Japan for any formal kind of religious education in schools (Inoue, 2009). Thus, in much of East Asia, where religions certainly flourish, we need to understand the alternative ways in which religious education takes place, other than the Western model of classroom-based RE lessons. This is an issue that will be addressed in many of the chapters in this book.

When it comes to South East Asia, there is a different story reflecting the diversity of this part of the world. Singapore does not include religious education in the school curriculum having discarded a Religious Knowledge curriculum in the 1980s (Tan, 2008). In Indonesia there is a compulsory religious education subject and it is required to be taught in all schools, public and private (Tan, 2008a). In Malaysia, schools provide a single compulsory subject, Islamic Education, which is compulsory in all schools thus representing a monoreligious approach to religious education. Non-Muslim students take a subject called Moral Education (Tan, Naidu & Osman 2018). This brief synopsis does not do justice to the lived reality of religious

education for the region's students but it does highlight the diversity of approaches adopted across the region. These approaches are replicated elsewhere as well: a monoreligious approach in Pakistan and Thailand and multi-religious approaches in other South Asian nations such as Bangladesh and India.

In addition to the above, there are more intensive forms of monoreligious education connected to both Islam and Buddhism. For Islam, madrassas, dedicated schools specifically for direct instruction in many aspects of Islam and the Qur'an, stand alongside public and private schools in Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh (Letchamanan & Dhar, 2018, pp.110) and even Hong Kong (Ho, 2013). For Thai Buddhism, there is the practice of ordaining young (10–17 years old) male novice monks for short periods of time. They get to experience monastic life in everything from wearing the traditional monks' robes, to chanting and learning the rules of Buddhist life and living. It is seen as a preparation for becoming moral leaders in Thai society (Chladek, 2018).

Yet the categories identified by Pelupessy-Wowor (2016) cannot account for every form of religion and religious education that can be found in Asian contexts. Daoism and Confucianism, for example, have played a major role in the history of China over a very long period of time yet it is difficult to identify a single creedal statement to which all members must assent. As Lindbeck (2019) pointed out with respect to many such religions, "beliefs are frequently not stated in creedal form but are diffusely expressed in sacred writings, legal codes, liturgical formulas and theological and philosophical reflection". The key question from the point of view of religious education is how these diffuse sources of knowledge are transmitted, or even whether they are transmitted?

Chou, Tu & Huang (2013) explained that "the transition of these values (i. e. Confucian values) from one generation to the next is founded on the older generations which are considered role models who are expected to teach the younger generations the specific and appropriate values of Confucianism" (p.64). They point out that these roles most often fall to parents and teachers. Thus "teaching" is informal: no structures, no texts, no examinations, just lived experience and its transmission from generation to generation. Traditional notions of religious education, therefore, cannot be applied in this context. This is one of the distinctive features of religious education in Asian contexts.

Inter-referencing and its role in comparative education

Comparative education is a well-established field of study and members of the comparativist community have spent a great deal of time reflecting on its purposes, methods and directions (Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007). Initially concerned with the comparison of national education systems, there has been an increasing recognition in the field that there are multiple points of comparison that can enhance learning and understanding about specific phenomena and these may or may not be located in or related to national systems of education. Religion and religious education are good examples of social practices, sometimes related to national education systems and sometimes not, that can benefit from a

comparative perspective. As shown from the analyses in the previous sections, there are multiple approaches to religious education. As we learn more about these, our understanding is enhanced, our frame of reference is enlarged and, hopefully, our appreciation for diversity comes to the fore.

While this comparative perspective has been recognized previously, many of the studies conducted to date have focused on the European experience (Bråten, 2013; Schröder, 2016,) although there is a recent trend to examine Asian experiences as well (Sivasubramaniam & Hayoe, 2018). The current book seeks to contribute to this trend, but not in a traditional comparative framework.

Chen (2010) advanced the idea that comparisons within Asia, rather than between Asia and other geographic or cultural entities, served the purpose of decolonialising the Asian experience and establishing points of reference that enhanced local and indigenous knowledge. He proposed an 'inter-referencing strategy' in which the general unit of analysis is the region without any need to look beyond. Within the frame of the region, comparisons can be made without judgements and without yardsticks against some imagined standard such as Western experience. Inter-referencing is about looking inwards, valuing the local and learning from each other. This is the approach we have adopted in this book. It is a particularly suitable approach where the focus is religious education.

Religion arises and develops in distinct local social, political and cultural contexts. Religious education is derived from these contexts and is shaped by them. We want to understand these contexts, the social practices they support and how these influence the everyday lives of local people who experience them on a daily basis. Our book is about understanding, appreciating and learning from the multiple contexts in which religious education flourishes across different Asian contexts.

In bringing this chapter to a close we can point towards what is to come. Our authors come from multiple contexts within Asia and they seek to provide a snapshot of religious education in the contexts they know well. While the contributions range across the diversity that is Asia, we are conscious that there are parts of the region that are not represented. We hope that the work presented here will provide the basis for ongoing research across the region. Too often religion and religious education are neglected in academic discourse in favour of safer topics, yet they are part of the social experience of so many people. We need to know more about these experiences, to understand them in context and where such experience differs, to learn to appreciate the beauty of difference. We hope this book will make a contribution to an ongoing agenda concerning religious education and its role and influence in multiple Asian contexts.

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6 Character education: The future key for developing Indonesian citizens with character

Theodorus Pangalila

Introduction

On August 17, 2045 Indonesia will celebrate the first century of its independence. However such a celebration seems problematic when it is viewed in light of the various problems faced by Indonesian people today. All of these national problems are caused by the low quality of human resources in Indonesia. The low quality of human resources in Indonesia itself is caused by many factors. However, those factors can be represented in one word; that is "character." The poor quality of character is regarded as the cause of various problems of a social, economic or cultural nature, as well as in many other aspects of life. Based on the fact that the character of the young generation of Indonesia is weak, the Government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, held a speech in commemoration of National Education Day on May 2, 2012 with the theme of "The Rise of Indonesia's Golden Generation." In this paper, the writer attempts to discuss character education and its urgency in the nation and state of Indonesia. Current character education is the solution to create Indonesian citizens who have character and are able to compete in the era of globalization.

The opening of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia mandated Pancasila as the basis of the country and the life view of the Indonesian nation, which must inspire all fields of development. One of the most important fields of national development and the foundation of life in the community, nation and state is the development of national character. There are several fundamental reasons that underlie the importance of national character building philosophically, ideologically, normatively, historically and socio-culturally. (The Master Plan of National Character Building of 2010–2025, 2010).

The building of national character was sparked by the founders of the nation to allow for a common view of holistic culture and Indonesian character as a nation. This is very important because it aims to bring about the same understanding and views among the population to realize the welfare and prosperity of all the people of Indonesia. (The Master Plan of National Character Building of 2010–2025, 2010). The government and various circles have concluded that various national

problems faced by the people in Indonesia nowadays are caused by a weak character, especially the national character of Indonesian society. From this case, many programs are instigated with the goal of developing the national character.

Realizing the weakness of national character, the government in 2010 formulated a Master Plan of National Character Development for 2010–2025. According to this master plan (2010:2), the problems faced by people in Indonesia today confirm the uncertainty of identity and national character, As stated above, these boil down to (1) disorientation and uncomprehending values of Pancasila as the national philosophy and ideology, (2) the limitations of integrated policy device in realizing the essential values of Pancasila, (3) the shift of ethics values in national life, (4) the fading away of people's awareness toward the values of national culture, (5) the threat of national disintegration, and (6) the decrease of national independence.

Character education principally aims to build up good, smart, and characterized people. Responding to this matter, the president of Republic Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, in his speech in the commemoration of National Education Day and National Resurgence Day, Jakarta, 20 May 2011, emphasized five important things:

> *First,* people in Indonesia are very moral, have a certain character, and are behaviourally good. For that reason, our society must be religious, civilized, and anti-violence. *Second,* people and the state of Indonesia must be intelligent and rational, knowledgeable, with high logical reasoning ability, visionary, and must have ideas to plan a better future. That is the second one. *Third,* people in Indonesia must be more innovative, and move forward to pursue progress. They will be creative and innovative. They will work hard to change things. Our country will never change toward a better direction unless we change it. *Fourth,* strengthening the spirit must be a *can do spirit*. Despite the very hard problems we face, if we really want to solve them, the answer is always there: never give up, look for a solution, and then run the solution. *Fifth,* or lastly, all of us, people of Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke, from Miangas to Rote Island, must become true patriots loving our country, nation, and homeland. In the relationship of today's world, we do not want to be, or to adhere to a narrow nationalism, but an intelligent nationalism, and a true patriot loves their nation, state, and homeland, and then willingly makes sacrifices to advance this country.

Efforts for the development of the national character certainly are not new in the world of education in Indonesia. According to Budimansyah (2010, iii):

> Historically and socio-culturally, national and character building is a national commitment that has been growing and growing in the life of the society, nation, and state of Indonesia. The wise words contained in the various document of constitutional and political history, such as the manuscript of Sumpah Pemuda, proclamation, preamble of 1945, as well as reflected in the national anthem "Indonesia Raya" and other patriotic songs, are an undeniable proof that national and character building is the commitment of the people in Indonesia to be transformed along life.

From a historical perspective, national character education was started a long time ago, so at the present time it is our obligation to continue what has been laid out by Indonesian founding fathers.

The concept of character education

The definition of character, according to the Language Centre of the Ministry of National Education is the "congenital, heart, soul, personality, manners, behaviour, personality, traits, habits, temperament, character. Having a character is personifying, behaving, and tempering good".

Meanwhile, as quoted in Wikipedia (2013), character education is defined as:

> Character education is an umbrella term loosely used to describe the teaching of children in a manner that will help them develop variously as moral, civic, good, mannered, behaved, non-bullying, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant and/or socially acceptable beings. Concepts that now and in the past have fallen under this term include social and emotional learning, moral reasoning/cognitive development, life skills education, health education, violence prevention, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and conflict resolution and mediation. Many of these are now considered failed programs i.e., "religious education", "moral education", "values clarification".[1]

Based on Suyanto (2009), character is a way of thinking and behaving as a special characteristic for each individual, to live and work, whether in the sphere of family, community or the nation and state. A good characterized individual is someone who can make a decision and is ready to guarantee each result of the decisions that he/she makes.

Meanwhile, the national education ministry, the agency of research and development centre of curriculum (2010) says:

> Education is a conscious and systematic effort in developing the potential of learners. Education is also a business in preparing the youth generation for life, for the continuity of society and nation to be better in the future. That matter is marked by an inheritance of culture and character that has been owned by the society and nation. Therefore, education is a process of cultural and national character inheritance for the younger generation as well as the process of developing cultural and national character to increase the life quality of the people and nations in the future. In the process of cultural and national character education, actively the learners develop themselves, in the process of internalization, and appreciate the values to become their personality in associating in the community, developing the society's life to be more prosperous, as well as developing a dignified life of the nation.

Character education is an education for "building up" the personality of an individual through manners education whose result appears in someone's real action,

namely the good behaviour, honesty, responsibility, respect for others, hard work and so forth (Lickona, 1991 as cited in Bestari, 2010, p. 155).

In accordance with David Elkind & Freddy Sweet Ph.D (2004), as cited in Akhmad Sudrajat (2010), character education is intended as:

> "character education is the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values. When we think about the kind of character we want for our children, it is clear that we want them to be able to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right, and then do what they believe to be right, even in the face of pressure from without and temptation from within".

In The Master Plan of National Character Building of 2010–2025 (2010), it is mentioned that:

> Character education is a conscious and well-planned effort to realize ambience as well as the process of empowerment and civilize potential learners to build personal character and/or unique-good groups as citizens. It is expected to give optimal contribution in realizing a society who believe in the one and only God, just and civilized humanity, soul of the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives, and social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia.

Then in The Master Plan of National Character Building of 2010–2025 (2010) it is also said that:

> The national character is a unique collective behaviour quality – good nationality reflected in national awareness, understanding, taste, work, from the results of thought, heart, taste and work, as well as a sport of a person or group of persons. Indonesian character will define those behaviours based on the values of Pancasila, the 1945 constitution, its diversity of norms with the principles of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, and commitment to the unitary State of Republic of Indonesia.

Based on the above definitions, it can be inferred that character education is "the process of awarding guidance to the participants/students to become characterized persons in the dimensions of heart, thought, body, as well as taste and works. Learners are expected to have good characters including honesty, responsibility, intelligence, cleanliness and health, and be caring and creative. The characters are expected to be the whole personality reflecting the harmony of a processing result of HEART, MIND, BODY, and TASTE and WORKS" (Ministry of National Education, 2010).

Religious education in Indonesia

In the Indonesian context, religious education for the six officially recognized religions (Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism) by

the government is regulated in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003. In the Law it is said that National Education is an education system based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which is rooted in religious values, Indonesian national culture, and responsive to demands of changing times. National education functions to develop abilities and form a dignified character and national civilization in order to educate the nation, aiming for the development of potential participants to become human beings who believe in and fear one God, are noble, healthy, knowledgeable, creative, independent, democratic and responsible (National Education System Law, No. 20 of 2003, Art. 3).

Furthermore, more practically, in Article 36 paragraph 3 of the National Education System Law, it is said that the curriculum is prepared in accordance with the level of education within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia by taking into account:

a   increased faith and piety;
b   increase in noble character;
c   increasing the potential, intelligence, and interests of students;
d   diversity of regional and environmental potential;
e   demands for regional and national development;
f   the demands of the world of work;
g   the development of science, technology and art;
h   religion;
i   dynamics of global development; and
j   national unity and national values.

Then also in Article 37 Paragraph 1–2 of the Law on the National Education System, it is reaffirmed that the basic and secondary education curriculum must contain:

a   religious education;
b   civic education;
c   language;
d   mathematics;
e   natural sciences;
f   social sciences;
g   art and culture;
h   physical education and sports;
i   skills/vocational; and
j   local content.

Meanwhile in the higher education curriculum, it must include:

a   religious education;
b   civic education; and
c   language.

Based on the provisions of the Act above, in the context of the national education system in Indonesia, Religious Education becomes a compulsory subject at the elementary and secondary levels, even to Higher Education. In Law no. 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, it is reaffirmed that the compulsory subjects for the University Level are:

a   religion;
b   Pancasila;
c   citizenship; and
d   Indonesian.

Seeing the facts above, in the Indonesian legal context implementing Religious Education in Schools and Universities is regulated by the government of the Republic of Indonesia.

In the context of character education in Indonesia, religion is one of the main sources besides the values of Pancasila. Indonesian society is religious. Because of that, individual, social, and national lives are always based on religion and belief. Politically, national life will be consistent with religious values. From this consideration, cultural and national character education must be founded on religious values and principles.

Character education and religion are like two sides of a coin that cannot be separated, because both of them need each other and have more value, to balance and complement each other. Lack of religious education and character education are the main factors in decreasing the morale of adolescents, so now is the time for us to begin to fix this problem little by little, so that our teens do not succumb to it, because youth is the pillar of the state and religion (Turaikhan, 2018).

Values resources in cultural and national character education

According to the national education ministry, the agency of research and development centre of curriculum 2010, values developed in cultural and national character education are identified from the following sources.

> *Religion*: Indonesian society is religious. Because of that, individual, social, and national lives are always based on religion and belief. Politically, national life will be consistent with religious values. From this consideration, cultural and national character education must be founded on religious values and principles.
>
> *Pancasila*: The Republic of Indonesia is built on national life principles known as Pancasila. Pancasila is presented in the preamble of the 1945 constitution and further elaborated on in the clauses contained in the 1945 constitution. That is, values in Pancasila organize political, constitutional, economical, social, cultural, and artistic life. Cultural and national character education are aimed at preparing students to be better citizens, with the ability and willingness to carry out Pancasila's values in their lives as citizens.

Culture: In truth no human being lives in a society that is not based on cultural values recognized by the community. Those cultural values are the foundation in giving meaning toward a certain concept and definition in communicating among the members of that society. Such important cultural positions in the cultural life of the society require a source of values in cultural and national character education.

National Education Objectives: As the quality formulation that should be owned by each citizen of Indonesia, it is developed by education units in various levels and pathways. National education objectives include a wide range of humanity values which must be owned by the citizens. Therefore, National education objectives are the most operational source in developing cultural and national character education.

Consistent with the values sources above, it is possible to identify a number of values related to cultural and national character education as follows:

Table 6.1 Values descriptions of cultural and national character education

VALUES	DESCRIPTIONS
1. Religious	Attitudes and behaviours that comply in carrying out religious teachings which are adhered to, are tolerant of other faiths, and live by getting along well with other religions
2. Honesty	Behaviour that is based on the efforts of one's self to be someone who can always be trusted in their word, their actions, and jobs.
3. Tolerance	Attitudes and actions that respect differences of religion, tribe, ethnicity, opinions, attitudes, and actions.
4. Discipline	Actions that show an orderly and submissive behaviour in various conditions and regulations.
5. Hard work	Behaviour that shows an earnest effort in overcoming the various barriers to learning and assignments, as well as in doing a job as well as possible.
6. Creativity	Thinking and doing something to generate new results.
7. Independence	Attitudes and behaviours that do not depend on others in completing tasks.
8. Democratic	Ways of thinking and behaving that appraise the same lefts and obligations of one's self and others.
9. Anxiety	In one's attitudes and actions, he is always striving to be more profound and pervasive than anything he has previously learned, seen or heard.
10. The Spirit of Nationality	Ways of thinking and acting that put the interests of the nation and the country above the interests of one's self and their group.
11. Nationalism	Ways of thinking, acting, and doing that show loyalty, caring, and appreciation of the language, the physical environment, the social environment, culture, economy, and politics of the nation.

VALUES	DESCRIPTIONS
12. Appreciating the Achievement	Attitudes and actions that encourage one's self to produce something useful for the community, and recognize and respect other people's success.
13. Friendly/ Communicative	Actions that demonstrate a sense of love for talking, socializing, and working with others.
14. Peace Loving	Attitudes, words, and actions that cause others to feel happy and secure in one's presence.
15. Avid Reading	The habit of finding the time to read a variety of texts that give virtue for one's self.
16. Environmental Care	Attitudes and actions that are always working to prevent damage to the surrounding natural environment, and developing efforts to repair the damage of nature that is already happening.
17. Social Care	Attitudes and actions that always strive to give help to other people and communities in need.
18. Responsibility	The attitude and behaviour of a person to perform the duties and obligations which they should do, toward one's self, society, environment (natural, social and cultural), country and God Almighty.

Source: (National Education Ministry, The Agency of Research and Development left of Curriculum, 2010).

Regarding the nationality character values above, Suyanto (2009) says that there are nine pillars of character coming from the noble universal values, which are: *First*, the character of the love of God and all of his creation; *Second*, self-reliance and responsibility; *Third*, honesty/mandate, diplomatic; *Fourth*, respect and manners; *Fifth*, generous, helpful and mutual cooperation; *Sixth*, confidence and hard work; *Seventh*, leadership and justice; *Eighth*, kindness and humility; and *Ninth*, the character of tolerance, peace, and unity.

Character education components

Cultural education and national character are carried out through education of values or virtues that become the basic values of culture and national character. Virtue which is the attribute of a character is basically value. Therefore, cultural education and national character are basically the development of values derived from the life view or ideology of the Indonesian nation, religion, culture, and values that are formulated in the objectives of national education (National Education Ministry, The Agency of Research and Development Centre of Curriculum, 2010).

In character education, Lickona (1992) as cited in Bestari (2010:156) stressed the importance of three components of good character: moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action. These are necessary so that students are able to understand and work on policy values at once

Moral knowing

There are six factors that became the goal of the teaching of this component, namely:

1   awareness;
2   moral knowing of moral values;
3   perspective taking;
4   moral reasoning;
5   decision making; and
6   self-knowledge.

Moral feeling

There are six aspects of emotion that should be felt by a person with a strong sense of character:

conscience;
self-esteem;
empathy;
loving good;
self-control; and
humanity.

Moral action

Deeds/moral actions are learning outcomes of two components of character. To understand what drives a person in acting morally, we must look at three aspects of their character. These are:

1   competence;
2   will; and
3   habit.

Seven moral virtues

Next, Michele Borba (2008), in his book, *Building Moral Intelligence, Seven Major Virtues To Moral High Children*, emphasizes the seven important moral virtues in order for learners to be of good character. They are abstracted as follows:

- **Empathy** is at the core of moral emotions, helping children understand the feelings of others. These virtues make them sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, encourage them to help people who are in pain or distress and then treat them with compassion. A strong moral emotion encourages children to act properly because they can see the distress of others, and thus avoid performing actions that can hurt other people.

- *Conscience* is the inner voice that helps children choose the right path from the wrong path and stay on the scrupulous path; causing them to feel guilt when deviating from the proper path. This fortifies them from a bad influence and makes them able to act right, even though to do the opposite may be very tempting. This virtue is the foundation for the development of the nature of honesty, responsibility, and high integrity.
- *Self control* helps children resist the urge from within them and think before acting, so they do the right thing. So it reduces the small likelihood of taking action that would cause bad consequences. This virtue helps children become independent because they know that they can control their actions. From this aspect of their character comes the generosity and kind-heartedness, because the child is able to banish the desire to satisfy themselves, and instead stimulate the awareness concerned with the needs of others.
- *Respect*. Children behave well and respect others. This virtue directs the children to treat other people as they want others to treat them, thus preventing the children from being rude, unfair and hostile. If the children are accustomed to be respectful towards others, they will pay attention to the rights and feelings of others; as a result, they will also respect their self.
- *Kindness* helps children show their concern over the welfare and feelings of others. By developing this virtue, children will be more compassionate and less think of their self, as well as recognizing good deeds as the right move. Kindness also can make them more adept in thinking about the needs of others, showing compassion, giving help to those in need, as well as protecting those who are in trouble or pain.
- *Tolerance* makes children appreciate the differences in others, opening up to new views and beliefs, and respecting other people without discriminating against ethnicity, gender, appearance, culture, beliefs, ability, or sexual orientation. This virtue makes them treat others well and be full of understanding, against hostility, cruelty and bigotry, as well as appreciate people based on their characters.
- *Justice* guides children to treat others well, and to be impartial and fair, so that they can abide by the rules, taking turns and sharing, as well as hearing all parties openly before giving any judgements. Because this increases their sensitivity and moral virtues, they will be compelled to defend those who are treated unfairly and demand that everyone, regardless of nationality, culture, economic status, ability, or beliefs, is treated equally.

The urgency of character education in Indonesia

According to Sauri and Hufad (2010) the urgency of character education in Indonesia is based on the empirical fact that:

(1) the mandate of the legislation No. 20 of 2003 on national education system, article 3: national education acts developed the ability to form a dignified civilization and character in order to develop the nation's life;

(2) the formation of a strong and sturdy character of learners is believed to be important and will enable the learners to meet challenges in the future;

(3) our nation is going through an acute crisis of ethics and confidence;

(4) given the circumstances and the times are changing quickly, then the character education efforts undertaken need to be expanded and repackaged to make them more comprehensive and meaningful;

(5) character education needs to be designed, formulated and executed through transformation of family and culture, inside and outside the school life integrally;

(6) joint efforts to build the educational commitment through the equalization of perception in concepts, tools and practical development of cultural and national character education, so that the responsibilities are shared among family, the public and the government.

Seeing the various phenomena of the life of nation and state in Indonesia, which is filled with all kinds of problems caused by the weakness of national character, character education becomes a compulsory requirement for people in Indonesia. According to the Master Plan of National Character Building of 2010–2025 (2010), the flow thought of national character building can be described as follows:
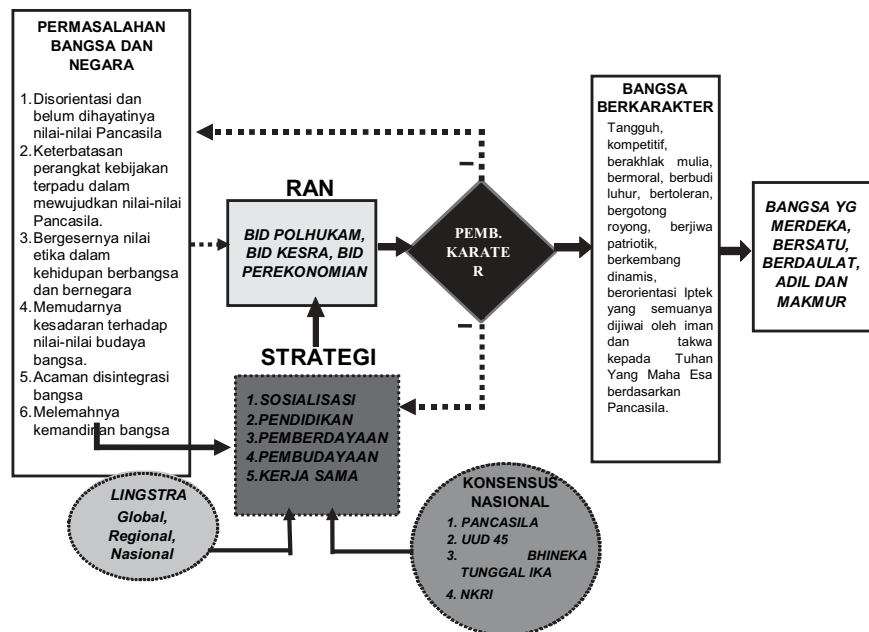

Figure 6.1 Flowchart design of national character building master plan.

Follow the development of the characters above, according to Ali Mustadi (2012), the application of character education in school at least can be reached through four integrated strategic alternatives. The first strategy is to integrate the content of character education that has been formulated into all subjects. The second strategy is to integrate character education into the daily activities at the school. The third strategy is to integrate character education into activities that are designed or planned. And the fourth strategy is to build communication and cooperation between the school and learners' parents.

Meanwhile according to Asep Mahpudz (2010), building the national character through education should be done comprehensively-integrally, not only through formal education, but also through informal and non-formal education. During this time, there is a tendency of formal, informal and non-formal education run separately from each other. As a result, character education seems to be partially responsible.

Based on the above experiences, principally, the development of cultural and national character is not included as a subject but rather integrated into subjects, self-development, and culture of the school. Therefore, teachers and schools need to integrate the values developed in cultural and national character education into the school-based curriculum (KTSP) and the Syllabus and Lesson Plan (RPP). (Ministry of National Education, the Agency of Research and Development Centre of Curriculum, 2010).

Next Antes and Norton (1994), as cited in Annette Kusgen McDaniel (1998), provide some basic principles for how moral education or character education could work effectively:

1 Provide opportunities for students to be responsible for each other by providing cross-age grouping and cross-age tutoring. The older students will benefit by being role models and by developing patience and tact, and the younger will benefit by being helped academically and witnessing a caring, helping relationship.
2 Relate educational experiences to students' lives providing opportunities for students to share their points of view.
3 Develop cooperative activities in the community with service projects to help students develop a sense of responsibility and connection to the community as a whole.
4 Encourage discussions with and among students concerning aspects of school life and how to interact with other people in the appropriate manner.
5 Guide children in playing a role in decision making in the classroom and school.
6 Provide forms of student self-government in public schools as a means of helping students contribute and develop critical thinking and interaction skills.
7 Use day-to-day activities and what is happening in the students' lives as opportunities to deal with values and ethics.
8 Encourage students to think in complex ways about moral issues in life as they appear in the curriculum.
9 Use reading and writing activities to encourage moral and ethical thought.

10 Structure the learning environment so that it models democratic values and provides a safe environment for learning, sharing, and cooperating.
11 Encourage self-discipline through cooperative interaction between persons in the learning environment.
12 Use discussion, role-playing, and analytical and creative projects as a basis for critical thinking about values, attitudes, character traits, and moral issues.
13 Use cooperative learning activities to help students develop social interaction skills.
14 Establish parent support groups to develop a moral consensus.

Conclusion

"Sow a thought and you reap an act. Sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and your reap a destiny." Those words of wisdom expressed by William M. Thackeray are about to confirm to us that characters are not formed by themselves, but rather must be inculcated as early as possible in order to enable the younger generation of Indonesians in 2045 and beyond to have good character. Because of this, character education is the key to the future of Indonesia, of 2045 and beyond.

Note

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Character_education

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