Local Wisdom as a Source of Values and Character Education: Identification of the Javanese Community in Surabaya

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http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v10i1.4346

Abstract

Javanese people have much local wisdom, taking the form of a philosophy of life. This local wisdom is still relevant today and has enormous potential for application as a source of values and character education. This study, therefore, aims to identify the character education values in Javanese local wisdom in Surabaya, particularly in the form of a philosophy of life and its relevance as a source of learning. Applying descriptive qualitative, this research’s data were collected through literature study and in-depth interviews and analyzed using the interactive Milles and Huberman model. The study results revealed 20 kinds of local wisdom of the Javanese people in Surabaya in the form of a philosophy of life that still exists today and is relevant to character education. Of the 20 kinds of local wisdom, ten points of character education can be identified: 1) hard work; 2) orderly; 3) being careful or alert; 4) being responsible; 5) tawakal and gratitude; 6) honest; 7) thrifty and careful; 8) brotherhood; 9) self-confidence; 10) be alert. These ten points of value have the potential to be used as learning resources, especially in the history department.

Keywords: Local Wisdom; Character Education; Javanese Community

Introduction

Character education has been one of the central themes in Indonesia's education world for the past two decades, to be precise, since the Declaration on National Culture and Character Education as a national movement in January 2010. Strengthening discussions about character education is a response to the increasing prevalence of immoral behavior among Indonesian people (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010; Marzuki, 2013). This behavior is reflected, among other things, in the fading attitude (appreciation) of diversity, a decrease in the spirit of mutual cooperation, an increase in dishonest behavior, a loss of politeness in language and behavior, and others.

In dealing with these conditions, the role of the world of education is indeed crucial. It is stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, stating that national education functions to develop capabilities and shape dignified national character and civilization in the framework of educating the nation's life. The importance of values and character education is also...
reinforced by research results, demonstrating that a person's success is not determined solely by knowledge and technical abilities (hard skills) but by the ability to manage oneself and others (soft skills). A study also revealed that success is only determined by about 20% of hard skills and the remaining 80% by soft skills. Even the most successful people in the world can succeed because they are more supported by soft skills than hard skills. It further suggests that the quality of student character education is vital to improving.

In simple terms, character education can be defined as a conscious effort to introduce students to a good character (Hoge, 2002). Lickona (2015) also mentions that the purpose of character education is to create good personalities, good schools, and good communities. Meanwhile, good character includes knowing good (moral knowing), wanting good (moral feeling), and doing good (moral action). Hence, it can be said that character education is a system of instilling character values in school members, comprising components of knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to implement these values.

In Indonesia, as stated in the Cultural and National Character Education document issued by Balitbang Puskur (Curriculum Center of Research and Development Agency), character education is intended to develop capabilities and shape dignified national character and civilization to educate the nation's life. Moreover, the purpose of character education is inseparable from efforts to achieve national education goals, i.e., to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and fear God Almighty, have a noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Dekdidbud, 2010).

It is further elucidated that 18 central character values are the primary targets of character education: 1) religious; 2) honest; 3) tolerance; 4) discipline; 5) hard work; 6) creative; 7) independent; 8) democratic; 9) curiosity; 10) national spirit; 11) love for the motherland; 12) appreciate achievements; 13) friendly/communicative; 14) peace-loving; 15) fond of reading; 16) care for the environment; 17) social care; 18) responsibility. In its development, the 18-character values above are then narrowed down into five central character values: religious, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity (Kemdikbud, 2017; Syaputra & Selvianti, 2021).

Apart from the several values above, psychologists also identify several fundamental character values for character education: 1) love for Allah and His creation (nature and its contents); 2) responsibility, honesty, respect, courtesy, compassion, care, and cooperation; 3) confident, creative, hardworking, and never give up; 4) justice and leadership; 5) kind and humble; and 6) tolerance, love of peace, and love of unity. Another opinion states that the primary human character consists of 1) can be trusted; 2) respect and attention; 3) care; 4) honest; 5) responsibility; 6) nationality; 7) sincerity; 8) brave; 9) persevere; 10) discipline; 11) visionary; 12) fair; 13) have integrity. Even though they are slightly different, it can be said that the character values above have the same essence. In terms of its implementation, schools can choose and develop more or higher values (which are neither absolute nor relative) according to the school's needs, conditions, and environment.

In Indonesia's character education context, character values are developed explicitly from four primary sources, i.e., religion, culture, Pancasila, and national education goals (Hasan, 2012). Concerning culture, one of them is in the form of local wisdom values already rooted in society. Haba (2007: 330) argues that local wisdom refers to various cultural assets that grow and develop in a society, and are known, trusted, and recognized as essential elements capable of strengthening social cohesion among community members. Syaputra & Dewi (2020) also explains local wisdom as noble values in local cultures in the form of traditions, proverbs, and life mottos.

Additionally, local wisdom is highly valued as part of the local culture and national cultural heritage. Many experts argue about the critical role of local wisdom, especially in the current globalization era. According to Ratna (2012: 484), local wisdom through sacred values passed down from generation-to-generation functions as an adhesive cement, strengthening relationships between
individuals, families, and larger groups, such as the nation and state. Furthermore, Zed (2012: 2) contends that local wisdom containing values can provide directions for adherents to act. In other words, cultural values serve as a benchmark and measure to determine what is good and what is not good, what is valuable and worthless, and what is permissible and what is not.

Based on the description above, various cultures full of wisdom, which exist in various regions in Indonesia, have immense potential to be integrated into learning in schools. In the context of the socio-cultural environment of the Javanese people, one kind of local wisdom that remained firmly rooted in society is a philosophy of life and taboos/prohibitions. Therefore, this study aims to describe the values of character education in Javanese local wisdom.

Research Method

The approach applied in this research was descriptive qualitative. As the instruments, the authors went directly to the research location to live up to the values of local wisdom in society, especially in the form of advice. This approach was chosen based on the considerations that: 1) although it only covers a small/limited scale of research locations, the qualitative approach is capable of developing a broader conceptual framework; 2) this approach model is not solely concerned with results, but the process aspect is something more important; 3) this exploratory-empirical qualitative approach is excellent when a study wants to explain a phenomenon in depth and comprehensively so that the research results are detailed descriptions, which are not only rigid but also in-depth (Bogdan & Tylor, 1982). Data was then collected using two main techniques: literature study and in-depth interviews. The data analysis phase was performed using the interactive model of analysis techniques, including components of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and verification or drawing conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

Results and Discussion

1. Local Wisdom

Local wisdom in foreign languages is often conceptualized as local wisdom, local knowledge, or local intelligence. Local wisdom can also be interpreted as a thought about life. This thought is based on clear reasoning and good thoughts and contains positive things. Also, local wisdom can be translated as the work of reason, deep feelings, character, behavior forms, and human dignity recommendations. Further, knowledge of local wisdom will make individuals’ souls more virtuous.

Additionally, Ahimsa-Putsa (2007) defines local wisdom as a set of knowledge and practices that can be used to solve problems faced in a good and right way according to the community. As Rahyono (2009: 7) stated, local wisdom is human intelligence possessed by certain ethnic groups obtained through community experience. In other words, local wisdom results from specific communities through their experiences and may not necessarily be experienced by other communities. These values will be very rigidly attached to particular communities and have gone through a long journey of time throughout the existence of that society. Thus, based on the definitions of local wisdom, they at least imply several concepts: 1) local wisdom is a lifelong experience deposited as a guide to one's behavior; 2) local wisdom cannot be separated from the owner's environment; 3) local wisdom is dynamic, flexible, open, and continuously adapts to the times (Syaputra, 2019).

Local wisdom is also a comprehensive phenomenon. The scope of local wisdom is quite a lot and varied in terms of source and orientation. About values or ethics, Suseno (1981) claims that one of the primary sources of local wisdom is a philosophy of life, which is summarized in various epic stories, folklore, songs, slogans or proverbs, and advice often spoken by people in everyday life. Furthermore, it
is described that the local wisdom values commonly found in the Javanese philosophy of life are such as the spirit of togetherness, mutual cooperation, work ethic, harmony, and others. For example, local wisdom in proverbs, *rame ing gawe sepi ing pamrih*, teaches people to have a hard work ethic and high discipline by doing a lot and talking less.

2. Surabaya Local Wisdom

Surabaya is a city with unique characteristics compared to other cities in East Java. According to the population census in 2010, the population in Surabaya City was 2,765,908 people. With an area of 333,063 km$^2$, the population density of Surabaya City was 8,304 people per km$^2$. The population of Surabaya City consists of various ethnic groups, such as Javanese, Madurese, Sundanese, and others. However, most of the Surabaya City population is from the Javanese ethnic group. The Javanese who inhabit the Surabaya City amount to around 83.63%, Madurese as many as 5.7%, Tonghoa, Arabs as many as 2.4%, and the rest are from other ethnic groups, such as Balinese, Sundanese, Batak, Bugis, Manado, Minangkabau, Dayak, Toraja, Ambon, Aceh, and foreign people. Compared to Javanese society in general, the Javanese in Surabaya have a tougher and more egalitarian temperament. It is because Surabaya City is located very far from the center of the kingdom or palace, considered the center of Javanese culture. Surabaya City also has a particular Javanese dialect known as *Boso Suroboyoan*. This dialect is spoken in and around Surabaya and strongly influences the eastern part of East Java Province. This dialect is known for its egalitarian nature and outspokenness and does not recognize various levels, like Javanese in general.

As with Javanese people in general, the people of Surabaya have several kinds of local wisdom that are very relevant as a source of character education. Based on the research results, several kinds of local wisdom were found in the people of Surabaya. Some of these kinds of local wisdom are as follows:

1. *Rame Ing Gawe Sepi Ing Pamrih*

It is an expression in Javanese culture, which is full of values and character education, especially those related to the character of working hard. For the Javanese people, working hard is highly recommended, even ordered. Working hard is also a character that the ancestors have long passed down. Without working hard, this nation cannot produce a noble, high-quality cultural heritage. For example, a sacred religious building in the form of an enshrinement, which can still be enjoyed today, is a manifestation of the spirit of hard work from the ancestors. Without working hard, it is also impossible to build the Penataran Temple, Borobudur Temple, and Prambanan Temple, which are phenomenal. The teaching in this expression further means that people must work hard without demanding anything in return or wanting to get more.

2. *Wong Lumoh Lan Keset Iku Prasasat Wisa*

This expression means that a person who is lazy and does not want to work hard is likened to poison since it will cause much harm to himself and others. A lazy person will also harm himself because he can cause disease. It is due to the fact that his body is never used to moving or working. In addition, people who do not want to work will be susceptible to diseases, such as diabetes, gout, cholesterol, and others, because their food consumption is never processed into energy. In the construction of society, a lazy person will also be able to endanger the lives of the people around him as he might commit acts that are not commendable to make ends meet. Therefore, based on this Javanese cultural expression, there are character values that can be taken, i.e., a person must work hard and not be lazy since work will be able to fulfill his life needs and will not be poison to others.
3. Sapa Sing Temen Tinemu

This expression means that whoever is honest will eventually achieve his goal. Honest character is a very noble character for one's success. Finding intelligent people is easy, but finding honest people is very difficult. Therefore, anyone with an honest character will surely achieve his goal. An honest character will also help a person achieve success since many people are successful because of their honesty, and many people fail and are even destroyed because of dishonesty. These local wisdom values teach people always to be honest because, with honesty, people will get what they want.

4. Melik Nggendong Lali

This expression describes the nature of an ambitious person, i.e., a person who must be fulfilled if he has a desire or a very ambitious person to obtain something, which in general will cause him to forget the truth. One must indeed have high aspirations and a highly competitive spirit, but one must not be ambitious because it will cause people to justify all means and forget the right way. Many ambitious people, whose wishes must be fulfilled, will eventually behave in ways that deviate from the rules and laws; they will forget the path of truth and take any path to reach their goal, even if it is wrong. Hence, this expression contains an orderly or rule-abiding character value.

5. Tumindhak Kanthi Duga Lan Prasojo

Acting or behaving must always be thought through carefully and appropriately considered. People's actions should always be based on kindness or prayogo in Javanese. This expression of local wisdom teaches people to have the character to think smartly and carefully in living this life so they can be safe, happy, prosperous, and not harm others. With these characters, people will constantly weigh with a thoughtful and careful mind what they will do to be safe and not harm other people.

6. Sing Sapa Lena Bakal Cilaka

This expression of local wisdom teaches people to always be careful. If people are not careful, they will be self-defeating. Many cases of abuse of authority and power are also due to the officials being careless and not alert, so they are caught up in legal cases. In today's life, there are many criminal acts, and one of the reasons is not being careful and alert. People’s negligence will cause others to exploit opportunities to do evil. Another expression is that crime occurs because of an opportunity, i.e., carelessness and not being aware of oneself. This negligence will cause harm and become the object of criminal acts.

7. Sing Sapa Salah Seleh

This expression of local wisdom teaches people that they will definitely be seen if they are wrong and should immediately admit their mistakes. The value that can be used to develop the noble character of this expression is that individuals as human beings must be willing to admit that if they make a mistake, no matter how well they cover it up, the mistake will be revealed one day. Therefore, people must have the nature of a big soul to admit mistakes while trying to fix them.

8. Nrima Ing Pandum

It is a Javanese philosophy that is very deep in meaning, which teaches every human being to try their best, but the results are always left to the Almighty. Nrima ing pandum does not mean teaching people a form of being lazy to work and resigning themselves to the fate they receive. However, it actually contains the opposite meaning, where humans must try or work as much as possible. Then, what will be obtained from the results of the effort is left to the Almighty, with gratitude for whatever they get. In fulfilling household economic needs, the value of this local wisdom teaches the Javanese people always to feel grateful for the gifts they receive without feeling jealous of other people's gifts.
9. Aja Nggege Mangsa

The expression *aja nggege mangsa* consists of the words *aja* (do not), *nggege* (speed up or ahead), and *mangsa* (time). Explicitly, this expression means do not get ahead of time. In Javanese ethics and philosophy, this expression has a deeper meaning. Its meaning is closely related to the attitude of life and the relationship between human identity as an individual, social, and a person created by God. This expression also contains advice that to achieve specific goals or ideals, and a person must be able to control himself. For the sake of a desire, a person is advised not to commit fraud. Without being based on self-control and the belief that God will determine everything, one often slips into the attitude of being ahead of time. From that uncontrollable desire, a person can fall into negative actions as long as his goals or desires are achieved. To avoid this, in trying, one needs to balance enthusiasm with an attitude of surrender, which is based on an attitude of *samadha* (moderate, reasonable) life and does not appear too *ngaya* (too self-effacing).

In today's era, *nggege mangsa* is almost synonymous with taking shortcuts with a negative connotation. Taking shortcuts tends to violate normative procedures, generate dishonest attitudes, and is likely to harm other parties. As a result, *nggege mangsa* acts can lead to the emergence of social jealousy and build dishonest behavior in society. Therefore, Javanese culture teaches that one does not need to take actions that lead to *nggege mangsa*. To arrive at this attitude of life, one needs to adhere to the Javanese teachings of *yen pesthine mesthi kelakon* (if it is God's will, it will be carried out). In achieving a desire or aspiration, one is also advised to *mbudidaya linambaran nyenyuwun marang Gusti* (trying while praying to God).

10. Gemi Nastiti Lan Ati-Ati

*Gemi* means frugal, careful, and modest. People who are always *gemi* calculate all expenses so that they can be effective and efficient. A *gemi* attitude is entirely different from a greedy and stingy lifestyle. *Gemi's* actions are based on the calculation that collecting wealth is not easy. By squeezing sweat and slamming bones, efforts are not necessarily successful. Therefore, a lifestyle of luxury, extravagance, and wasting money is very contrary to the attitude of *gemi* living. Actually, the *gemi* attitude is also an action with economic principles based on rational thinking.

Furthermore, *nastiti* relates to a person's actions in using his property. In this case, the Javanese are very calculating in using their wealth. The assets collected by hard work are managed, so expenses do not exceed income, causing much debt. *Nastiti* also means being careful in budget management, not containing elements of stinginess, tightfistedness, and greed, which use rational considerations.

Then, caution (*ati-ati*) is a decision of thoughts and feelings that seeks to avoid the worst risks for oneself and others. Everyone must always be careful, full of consideration, use a priority scale to spend money according to their needs, and not always have to obey their wishes.

11. Gegedhen Empyak Kurang Cagak

This Javanese proverb, which is full of local wisdom values, means that "the peg is bigger than the pole" in Indonesian. It implies a person with great desires beyond his abilities. In an economic context, it means people whose expenses are more significant than their income. In fact, humans must be able to measure and understand how much their income is to match their expenses. In an agrarian economy, although almost all the needs of rural communities can be met through agricultural activities, they must be careful in managing the balance between the economic resources they have and the expenses to meet their needs. In an industrial or urban society, people must always pay attention to the balance between these economic resources and their expenditures. Thus, their lives do not experience difficulties due to too much expenditure to meet their needs with their income. The lesson value drawn from this
expression is that people should always carefully calculate all expenses, which must be adjusted to income so that problems do not occur in the economic aspects of life.

12. Kalah Satak Bathi Sanak

This Javanese proverb means experiencing a loss in terms of funds but gains in the form of relatives, relations, or families. This value of local wisdom in Javanese culture also has the understanding that, as human beings, brotherhood is more valuable than property or money. According to Dr. Kuswariningsih, M.Pd., the Javanese would rather lose property than relatives. With many relatives, or sanak in the Javanese language, one will get many benefits, and many relatives will be able to increase one’s fortune, work opportunities, economy, help each other, and others.

13. Ajining Diri Saka Lathi Lan Budi

This expression implies that a person's pride depends on his tongue, words, and character. Consequently, a person will be valued for his character reflected in his speech and behavior. Therefore, the issue of ethics is vital if that person wants to be respected by others. People will not be valued based on their wealth or position but on their behavior or character, reflected in their personality.

14. Tumindhak Kanthi Duga Lan Prayogo

This local wisdom has the meaning that if one wants to act, he must always take into account the consequences and be based on goodness. People who act without considering the consequences will endanger themselves and others. People who want to act should also be based on goodness so that people will feel uncomfortable if they do bad things. Value and character education that can be obtained through this local wisdom are that people as human beings must always carefully calculate the consequences of their actions, carefully consider the good and bad consequences, and always be based on good values, or prayogo in Javanese.

15. Percaya Marang Diri Pribadi

This expression suggests that one must believe in oneself to succeed. Many people fail to achieve their goals because they do not believe in their abilities. With high confidence in his abilities, a person will be motivated to succeed. On the other hand, people who lose confidence in their abilities are actually headed for failure. Value and character education that can be taken from this local wisdom is that one must become a tough and strong person because of self-confidence.

16. Kaduk Wani Kurang Duga

This local wisdom teaches people to have an attitude of not only having the courage to do something but not with careful calculations. A person cannot only have courage without considering the situation and surrounding conditions when doing something to be safe. Without careful calculations and only having courage, people can fail to reach their goals or lose ridiculously.

17. Yitna Yanma Lena Kena

This expression means that if people are alert, they will be safe, but if they are careless, they will suffer a disaster. This local wisdom teaches people always to be vigilant everywhere to be safe. Do not let your guard down so that it will endanger you. From this local wisdom, character value education that can be taken is for people always to be careful in living life to be safe. If people are careless and not alert, the possibility of disaster will be huge.
18. Menang Tanpa Ngasorake

This expression has the meaning that if someone is successful and wins in a competition or contest, do not be arrogant by looking down on the loser. If someone wins, do not puff out your chest too much and pat it excessively since it can lower the self-esteem of someone who is a loser. As a winner, one must still respect and appreciate the opponent as a brother without demeaning him. It must always be done so that people's relationships with others will be adequately maintained. Be a winner and be successful, but do not be arrogant and always be humble.

19. Ngunduh Wohing Pakerti

This expression implies that everyone will get what he does. Therefore, whoever does good will be rewarded with goodness; conversely, whoever does evil will also get badness. This local wisdom educates people constantly to do good deeds since every deed will be rewarded according to what is done. Hence, from this local wisdom, the character values that can be developed are for people to like to do good deeds. It is because, in the end, people will also receive kindness in return and vice versa.

20. Mumpung Anom Ngudiya Laku Utomo

This Javanese proverb suggests that while young, one must continue to seek knowledge that teaches goodness and good behavior, or *laku utomo* in Javanese. Knowledge related to values, ethics, and morals is crucial to learn to become a person with a good personality later. This value of local wisdom in Javanese culture also has the understanding that, as human beings, brotherhood is more valuable than property or money. According to Dr. Kuswariningshih, M.Pd., the Javanese would rather lose property than relatives. With many relatives, or *sanak* in the Javanese language, one will get many benefits, and many relatives will be able to increase one’s fortune, work opportunities, economy, help each other, and others.

3. Local Wisdom as a Learning Resource for Values and Character Education

Learning resources are anything that students can use to learn materials and learning experiences in accordance with the goals to be achieved (Sanjaya, 2006: 172). According to Rohani (1997: 102), learning resources are all kinds of sources that exist outside a person (students) and enable (facilitate) the learning process. Learning resources are also a power that can be utilized for the benefit of the teaching and learning process, either directly or indirectly and either partially or wholly (Sudjana & Rivai, 2009: 76). In other words, learning resources are vital to guide students in finding material and solving problems.

Learning resources take many forms. Learning resources can be classified based on their form: printed learning resources, non-printed learning resources, learning resources in the form of facilities, learning resources in the form of activities, and learning resources in the form of the environment in the community. Learning resources can also be divided into design and utilization. Learning resources by design are those developed and produced for learning, while learning resources by utilization are ones that already exist and are used for learning.

The local wisdom values that live in the society's culture in the form of ideas or proverbs containing wisdom and ethics believed to be true and implemented in a particular community for generations are also a source of historical learning from the community. These local wisdom values can be used as learning resources in values and character education courses. It is because the local wisdom is loaded with ethical and moral values that can be developed as a source of learning. Moreover, the values of local wisdom, which are basically Javanese cultural ethics, are beneficial to be used as guidelines for the community to learn to be wise and intelligent in managing the fulfillment of their life needs. With
Javanese cultural ethics in the form of proverbs or Javanese proverbs and expressions, society is expected to take lessons from the moral messages implied.

In general, several items of values and character education sourced from local Javanese wisdom are as follows: 1) hard work; 2) orderly; 3) being careful or alert; 4) being responsible; 5) tawakal and gratitude; 6) honest; 7) thrifty and careful; 8) brotherhood; 9) self-confidence; 10) be alert.

Closing

Local wisdom is one of the primary sources of character education. In the context of the Javanese community in Surabaya, this local wisdom is a philosophy of life. The Javanese philosophy of life is rich in moral teachings, which can be used as a source of value education. Some of the central values contained in the Javanese philosophy of life are 1) hard work; 2) orderly; 3) being careful or alert; 4) being responsible; 5) trust and gratitude; 6) honesty; 7) thrifty and careful; 8) brotherhood; 9) self-confidence; 10) be alert. The ten values of character education in Javanese local wisdom can be used as learning resources, especially in the Values and Character Education Course in the Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universitas Negeri Surabaya. Not only that but character values in Javanese local wisdom can also be applied through other subjects at various types and levels of schools.

References


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