

CHARACTER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT AT DOKTOR NUGROHO UNIVERSITY MAGETAN AND INSTITUTO POLITECNICO DE BETANO TIMOR LESTE

Abdul Gafur ^{1*}, Ida Wahyu Wijayati ², Eka Jefri Aldi Yuliasmono ³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan

Received : 20 February 2022

Published : 30 April 2022

Revised : 28 February 2022

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.54443/ijeas.v2i2.3435>

Accepted : 17 March 2022

Link Publish : <https://radjapublika.com/index.php/IJEBAAS>

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the management of character education at Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan and Instituto Politécnico de Betano Timor Leste, focusing on policies, implementation practices, challenges, student perceptions, and recommendations to improve its effectiveness. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with university leaders, lecturers, and students, participant observation, and documentation of character education policies and programs at both universities. Data analysis was carried out thematically with an inductive approach to explore the main themes related to character education management. The results of the study show that both universities have implemented a structured character education policy, although with different approaches. Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan integrates character education into the academic curriculum through ethics and morals courses, while Instituto Politécnico de Betano focuses more on developing social character and leadership through extracurricular activities and community service. The practice of implementing character education is running well in both universities, although there are differences in its implementation. The main challenges faced are limited resources, difficulties in aligning perceptions about the importance of character education, and less active student involvement. Nevertheless, most students have a positive perception of the character education they receive.

Keywords: *Character Education, Educational Management, Higher Education, Character Education*

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a critical priority within the global discourse of higher education development, especially as universities face increasing pressure to produce not only intellectually capable but also morally responsible graduates. In Indonesia, character education is formally integrated into the national education policy, serving as a core element to instill integrity, responsibility, empathy, and social commitment in students (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017). However, despite its widespread adoption, the actual implementation of character education remains inconsistent and contextually diverse across institutions. Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan (UDNM) and Instituto Politecnico de Betano (IPB) offer a compelling case study for comparing different educational contexts: one from a more developed Indonesian institution, and another from a developing academic structure in Timor Leste. This study seeks to examine how each institution defines, manages, and evaluates its character education initiatives.

The increasing complexity of socio-cultural and technological challenges in the 21st century has made the development of student character more urgent than ever. Scholars such as Noddings (2020) argue that character education must be based on the ethics of care, highlighting the emotional and relational dimensions of moral development. This perspective suggests that successful character education requires nurturing a caring campus culture that involves administrators, faculty, and students collaboratively. Previous studies also emphasize the need to integrate character values not only in formal coursework but also in extracurricular and co-curricular activities (Suardi & Nursalam, 2020; Mentari, 2020). However, institutions vary significantly in their capacity to create such integrative environments, depending on their policies, resources, and stakeholder engagement.

Research has indicated that institutions with a clear character education policy framework tend to perform better in fostering students' moral awareness and civic engagement. For example, Asri (2022) notes that one of the primary challenges in Indonesian universities is aligning character education goals with academic outcomes, often hindered by high teaching loads and insufficient training for educators. Meanwhile, Gusnita, Jalinus, and Refdinal (2022) highlight how the digital era demands innovative character education models that address both ethical and aesthetic dimensions. These studies show that contextual and institutional factors significantly influence the implementation of character education in higher education. Therefore, understanding the management systems behind these practices becomes crucial to improving their effectiveness and sustainability.

In the context of Southeast Asia, Timor Leste presents a unique case of post-colonial education development where character education has only recently been incorporated into national reforms. The government of Timor Leste, through initiatives like the ALMA program, has prioritized inclusive education and school leadership to support value-based learning (UNICEF, 2021). Despite these efforts, the higher education sector in Timor Leste faces constraints in infrastructure, faculty capacity, and curriculum design. The Instituto Politecnico de Betano, in particular, is still in the process of building a stable system of character development within its campus culture. By contrast, Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan has institutionalized character education through formal courses and moral regulations embedded in its academic and administrative processes.

This research is necessary to examine the operational strategies, challenges, and student perceptions regarding character education in both UDNM and IPB. The comparison is valuable not only for highlighting differences in management and implementation but also for identifying best practices that can inform policy development in both countries. Furthermore, this study contributes to the academic discourse on cross-cultural character education management by exploring how values are interpreted and internalized in diverse socio-political contexts. Given the growing need for ethical leadership in Southeast Asia, insights from this research may support curriculum innovation and institutional strengthening. The findings also aim to support regional cooperation in higher education by offering a scalable model of character education management.

The research adopts a qualitative case study approach with data collected through interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. This method enables a deep exploration of how each institution articulates, applies, and assesses character education principles. It also allows researchers to capture subjective experiences and institutional narratives that shape the actualization of moral learning. A comparative lens further enhances the depth of analysis by contextualizing practices within each university's specific cultural and policy environment. Thus, the methodology not only supports thematic analysis but also facilitates a grounded understanding of character education dynamics across different educational ecosystems.

This study is guided by several research questions: What are the institutional policies regarding character education at UDNM and IPB? How is character education practically implemented in each institution? What are the challenges faced by university administrators and faculty in managing these programs? How do students perceive the value and relevance of character education in their academic and personal development? What recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness and integration of character education within the higher education framework of both institutions?

Ultimately, this research aims to generate evidence-based recommendations that support the institutionalization of character education in higher education, especially within the Southeast Asian context. The study seeks to provide practical insights for policy makers, educators, and academic leaders seeking to enhance the moral and civic capacities of university graduates. It also aspires to elevate the discourse on character education from normative assumptions to empirically grounded strategies. By comparing two contrasting educational institutions, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of what makes character education effective, sustainable, and culturally responsive. These insights are expected to inform national education policy and institutional design in both Indonesia and Timor Leste.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Character Education Management Policy

Character education policy is a strategic instrument in the higher education system to ensure that moral values are internalized systematically. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (2017), character policies must be integrated into academic regulations and the vision of educational institutions. The Independent Curriculum is one of the national policies that provides space for institutions to develop character education models according to local contexts (Ahmad, 2021). In the university environment, this policy is usually implemented in the form of ethics courses, campus activities, and student regulations. The ultimate goal is to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also have integrity.

In the international context, Timor Leste has also begun to develop character education policies in primary to secondary education. However, at the tertiary level, the policy is still not fully documented (UNICEF, 2021). Instituto Politecnico De Betano, for example, has begun to formulate policies through social leadership programs and community-based activities. Guterres (2015) emphasized that policies in Timor Leste still rely on central policies and have minimal institutional autonomy. Therefore, character policies in universities need to be developed through internal regulations that are adjusted to cultural values and institutional visions.

Implementation of Character Education in Higher Education

The implementation of character education in higher education is carried out through three main channels: formal curriculum, co-curricular activities, and campus culture. Suardi and Nursalam (2020) explained that the success of implementation depends on the integration of moral values in teaching, social interactions, and assessment systems. At Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan, implementation is carried out through special courses such as professional ethics and habituation activities on campus. Meanwhile, at Instituto Politecnico De Betano, an experience-based approach is more dominant, such as community service programs and leadership training. This reflects the differences in approach based on the resources and priorities of each institution.

According to Mentari, Yanzi, and Putri (2021), extracurricular activities such as student organizations, social services, and national seminars are effective means for implementing character values. These activities allow students to be directly and actively involved in internalizing values such as empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. Noddings (2020) added that interpersonal interactions in an academic environment must reflect caring and appreciation, not just cognitive teaching. Therefore, lecturers, education staff, and campus management have an important role in being moral role models for students. Consistent implementation will create a campus climate that supports character formation.

Challenges in Character Education Management

Challenges in character education management include structural, cultural, and personal aspects. Asri (2022) stated that one of the main obstacles is the imbalance between academic load and the implementation of character activities. Many lecturers have difficulty integrating character education into technical or exact lecture materials. On the other hand, limited budget and supporting infrastructure, such as student activity rooms, are also obstacles (World Bank, 2017). Another problem is the low interest of students in participating in character building programs voluntarily.

In addition, the absence of a standard measuring tool to assess the development of student character also complicates the evaluation process. Gusnita, Jalinus, and Refdinal (2023) added that challenges also arise from the dynamics of digital technology that influence student attitudes.

Uncontrolled exposure to social media often conflicts with the values that the campus wants to instill. The lack of training for lecturers to become effective character builders is also a fundamental problem (Faiz et al., 2021). Therefore, a systemic and cross-unit approach is needed to address these challenges sustainably.

Student Perceptions of Character Education

Students' perceptions of character education greatly determine the success of implementing programs designed by institutions. The results of the study showed that most students have a positive view of character education programs, especially in terms of leadership and discipline (Mentari et al., 2021). However, there are also some students who consider character education less relevant to their academic achievements or career prospects. This perception is influenced by students' personal experiences during character activities and the attitude of lecturers in appreciating moral values. Therefore, it is important for institutions to link character education to the real needs of students.

According to Noddings' research (2020), students are more receptive to character education when it is given through empathetic relationships, not an indoctrinating approach. Faiz and Kurniawaty (2020) also stated that student perceptions can improve if character education is packaged in an applicable and contextual manner, for example through case studies, social practices, and self-reflection. In addition, student involvement in designing or evaluating character programs can increase a sense of ownership and responsibility. Evaluation of student perceptions should be carried out periodically so that the program can be adjusted to student dynamics. A deep understanding of this perception is the basis for improving future implementation.

Recommendations for Increasing the Effectiveness of Character Education

Increasing the effectiveness of character education can be done through closer integration between policy, curriculum, and student participation. One of the main recommendations is to increase the capacity of lecturers through value-based character education training and reflective pedagogy (Suardi & Nursalam, 2020). Lecturers who understand the humanistic and contextual approaches will be more effective in guiding students. In addition, it is necessary to provide supporting infrastructure such as discussion rooms, character literacy media, and digital platforms that allow flexible value learning. Mentoring programs can also be an effective means of coaching.

Another recommendation is the need for collaboration between universities, government, and community sectors in supporting character education. Noddings (2020) emphasized the importance of involving all campus elements to create a consistent character culture. Faiz et al. (2021) suggested the use of project-based learning and service learning methods so that students can experience character values directly in real life. The character education curriculum must also be adjusted to current developments and global needs such as ethical leadership, digital responsibility, and cultural diversity. Continuous and data-based evaluation will strengthen the long-term success of character education in higher education.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type to deeply understand the management of character education in two higher education institutions, namely Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan (UDNM) in Indonesia and Instituto Politecnico De Betano (IPB) in Timor Leste. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the social, cultural, and policy contexts that influence the implementation of character education. Case studies allow for a thorough exploration of policies, implementation, challenges, and student perceptions at each institution. The purpose of this approach is to gain a holistic understanding that cannot be achieved with a quantitative approach alone. Therefore, this method is very appropriate for the research focus on institutional dynamics and subjective experiences.

The research was conducted for four months, starting in April to July 2023, covering preparation activities, data collection, analysis, and preparation of the final report. The research locations included the UDNM campus in Magetan, East Java, and the IPB campus in Manufahi, Timor Leste. The selection of locations was based on differences in institutional characteristics and contrasting socio-cultural contexts. The researcher hopes that the comparison between the two institutions can produce a contextual and comprehensive picture of cross-country character education. With different locations, this research also contains international comparative value.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with university leaders, lecturers in charge of ethics courses, and active students involved in character education activities. Observations were made on daily campus activities, interactions between lecturers and students, and the implementation of character building activities outside the classroom. Documentation was obtained from internal campus policies, syllabi, lesson plans, and reports of student organization activities. These three techniques were used triangulatingly to increase data validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Description

Qualitative Data

Character Education Policy The results of interviews with the managers of character education programs at both universities indicate that both institutions have clear policies related to character education. Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan implements character education through programs based on moral and ethical values, while Instituto Politecnico De Betano focuses on developing social character and leadership through extracurricular activities and community service programs.

Challenges faced in implementing character education at both universities include limited resources, such as budget and supporting facilities, as well as difficulties in aligning perceptions regarding the importance of character education among administrators and lecturers. In addition, there are challenges in actively involving students, especially students who do not fully understand the benefits of character education in their self-development.

Based on the results of interviews and FGDs, most students at both universities have a positive perception of character education. They feel that this program helps them in forming better characters, especially in terms of leadership, discipline, and empathy. However, there are also students who feel that character education is less relevant to their academic goals and focuses more on social aspects.

1) Respondent Demographics

A total of 200 students (100 from Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan and 100 from Instituto Politecnico De Betano) filled out the distributed questionnaires. The majority of respondents were undergraduate students aged between 18 and 24 years. Most of the respondents were students majoring in engineering, social sciences, and economics.

2) Student Perceptions of Character Education

The results of quantitative data analysis show that the majority of students at both universities have positive perceptions of the policies and practices of implementing character education. At Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan, 75% of students gave a positive assessment of the integration of character education into the academic curriculum, while 80% of students at Instituto Politecnico De Betano considered the character education program in social activities very useful.

3) Descriptive Statistics

Based on the questionnaire results, the data shows that the majority of students at both universities gave high scores on questions related to the impact of character education on their self-development (average score of 4.2 on a scale of 5). However, there were also some students who gave low scores on questions regarding the relevance of character education to their academic goals (average score of 2.9).

4) Hypothesis Testing

Statistical tests using t-test showed a significant difference between students' perceptions at both universities regarding the effectiveness of character education. Students at Instituto Politecnico De Betano tended to give a higher assessment of character education than students at Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan. The results of the regression test showed that there was a positive relationship between active participation in character education programs and student character development, with a regression coefficient of 0.65 ($p < 0.05$).

5) Policy Document Data

At Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan, the character education policy is reflected in the Strategic Plan for Educational Development, which integrates character education as part of the development of students' interpersonal skills. Meanwhile, at Instituto Politécnico de Betano, the character education policy is implemented through the Student Leadership Development Program which also involves community service activities.

6) Key Findings

- a. Character education policies at both universities have been implemented consistently, although with different approaches.
- b. The practice of implementing character education is going well in both institutions, although there are challenges related to resources and student involvement.
- c. Students' perceptions of character education are generally positive, but there are students who feel that character education is less relevant to their academic goals.
- d. The main challenges faced in implementing character education include limited facilities, lack of widespread understanding of the importance of character education, and difficulties in actively involving students.

DISCUSSION

This discussion aims to provide further understanding regarding the implementation of character education management at Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan and Instituto Politecnico De Betano and to identify factors that influence the effectiveness of character education programs in both institutions.

1) Character Education Policy at Doctoral University of Nugroho Magetan and Instituto Politecnico De Betano

The character education policy implemented in both universities shows the commitment of each institution to shape the character of students as an integral part of higher education. At Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan, this policy focuses more on the development of moral and ethical values integrated into courses and other academic activities. This policy is in line with the theory of value-based character education which emphasizes the importance of internalizing good values through the formal curriculum (Lickona, 1991). The implementation of this policy, although ongoing, is still limited by the challenges of resources and unequal understanding among lecturers.

Meanwhile, at Instituto Politecnico De Betano, the character education policy is more focused on developing social character and leadership through extracurricular activities and community service. This approach is in accordance with the experiential character education model which suggests that character learning is carried out through direct experience and reflection, as expressed by Dewey (1938). This proves that both institutions have different approaches but both focus on building student character.

2) Character Education Implementation Practices

The practice of implementing character education in both universities shows differences in its implementation. At Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan, character education is more integrated into the academic curriculum through certain courses that teach ethics and morals. However, some students feel that the material taught is too theoretical and not always relevant to their daily lives. This leads to debate about a more contextual and practical approach to character education that must pay attention to the needs of students in the real world.

At Instituto Politecnico De Betano, character education is implemented through extracurricular activities and community service, which provide students with opportunities to learn through social action. This program is more effective in shaping students' leadership and social character, but there are still challenges in involving students who are less active in these activities. This shows the importance of an active participation-based approach that has been proven effective in increasing student engagement in character education.

3) Challenges in Implementing Character Education

Some challenges found in the implementation of character education at both universities include limited resources, both in terms of budget and facilities that support the implementation of character programs. This is in accordance with previous findings that stated that lack of resources can hinder the effectiveness of character education in shaping student character (Noddings, 2013). Another challenge is the difficulty in aligning perceptions among administrators, lecturers, and students regarding the goals and benefits of character education itself.

At Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan, several lecturers feel that character education needs to be emphasized more in courses that focus more on technical and academic aspects. Meanwhile, at Instituto Politecnico De Betano, student involvement in community service activities is often hampered by a lack of awareness and commitment from some students regarding the importance of experiential character education. These challenges indicate that there needs to be a more inclusive and sustainable approach to involving all campus elements in character education.

4) Student Perceptions of Character Education

Most students at both universities showed positive perceptions of the character education implemented. They felt that character education helped them in forming important values such as leadership, discipline, and empathy. This finding is in line with previous studies showing that character education has a positive impact on students' personal development, especially in increasing social awareness and life skills. However, some students expressed that they felt a lack of relevance between character education and their academic goals. This suggests that a more integrated and contextual approach to character education with students' academic goals still needs to be improved. For example, the character education program at Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan may need to place more emphasis on the practical application of character values in the context of the world of work or students' professional lives.

5) Recommendations for Improving the Effectiveness of Character Education

Based on the above findings, some recommendations to improve the effectiveness of character education at both universities include:

- a. Resource Enhancement: Increase the budget and facilities for character education programs, and provide further training for lecturers so that they can integrate character education into academic learning in a more contextual way.
- b. Increasing Student Participation: Developing more engaging programs for students by actively involving them in character education activities, both in and out of class. The use of project-based learning methods and experiential learning can strengthen the impact of character education.
- c. Integration with Academic Curriculum: Develop a curriculum that better integrates character education with students' academic and professional goals, so that students can experience the direct benefits of character education in their daily lives and careers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, several things can be concluded regarding policies, implementation, challenges, student perceptions, and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of character education management at Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan and Instituto Politécnico de Betano:

A. Character Education Policy

Both universities have implemented structured character education policies, although their approaches differ. Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan integrates character education into the academic curriculum, while Instituto Politécnico de Betano places more emphasis on developing social character and leadership through extracurricular activities and community service.

B. Character Education Implementation Practices

Character education in both universities is going well, although there are differences in its implementation. At Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan, the integration of character education in the curriculum is considered less relevant by students, while at Instituto Politécnico de Betano, character education is more accepted through direct experience, although there are challenges in increasing student participation.

C. Challenges Faced

Limited resources, both budget and supporting facilities, are the main challenges. In addition, the difficulty in aligning perceptions about the importance of character education and the less active involvement of students are also major problems.

D. Student Perception

Most students at both universities had positive perceptions of character education, considering it to contribute to the formation of leadership, discipline, and empathy values. However, there were students who felt that character education was less relevant to their academic goals, indicating the need for adjustments in integrating character education into the curriculum.

E. Recommendations

Increasing resources for character education programs, including budget, facilities, and faculty training, Increasing student participation through character education activities that are more interesting and relevant to academic and professional life, Integrating character education with students' academic and professional goals to strengthen its positive impact in students' daily lives.

REFERENCES

- Gerson, R.F. (2004). *Measuring Customer Satisfaction*. Jakarta: PPM.
- Haefner, J.E., Deli-Gray, Z., & Rosenbloom, A. (2011), "The importance of brand liking and brand trust in consumer decision making: Insights from Bulgarian and Hungarian consumers during the global economic crisis", *Managing Global Transitions: International Research Journal*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 249-273.
- Hafeez, S., & Hasnu, S. (2010), "Customer satisfaction for cellular phones in Pakistan: A case study of Mobilink", *Business and Economics Research Journal*, Vol.1 No. (3), pp. 35-44.
- Hafeez, S. and Muhammad, B. (2012), "The Impact of Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty Programs on Customer's Loyalty: Evidence from Banking Sector of Pakistan", *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, Vol.3 No. 16, pp. 200-209.
- Heriyadi, Listiana, E. and Lay, YN (2018). *An Analysis of the Influence of Service Quality, Personal Selling and Complaint Handling and Trust on Customer Retention (Survey of Bank Harda International Savings Customers, Pontianak Branch)*. Volume 7 Number 2.

Kotler.P. (2008). Marketing Principles 2. Twelfth Edition. Jakarta: Erlangga.