

RE-EXPLORING LOCAL WISDOM IN THE FOLKTALE “ASAL USUL MASYARAKAT BATU BARA” TO BUILD STUDENTS’ LOCAL CULTURE-BASED CHARACTER

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Abstract: One of the problems currently faced by Indonesia’s education world is the degradation of students’ character and lack of character education in schools. As a consequence to that, various negative behaviors arise and thus can be potentially detrimental to students’ lives and future. The aim of this study is to re-explore local wisdom in the folktale “Asal-usul Masyarakat Batu Bara” (the origin of Batu Bara people) that can be used as a reference to build students' character. The method used in this research is a qualitative method. The data are sourced from *Antologi Cerita Rakyat Batu Bara* (Anthology of Batu Bara Folktales), while the data are local wisdom contained in the folktale *Asal-usul Masyarakat Batu Bara*. The data were analyzed using the techniques: (a) data collection, (b) data reduction, (c) data presentation, and (d) drawing conclusions and verification. It was revealed that the forms of local wisdom found in the folktale *Asal-usul Masyarakat Batu Bara* among others are prudence and wisdom, devotion to worship, courtesy, mutual cooperation, and adaptation.

Keywords: Local wisdom, folktale, character building

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's education world is currently experiencing a variety of extremely complex problems that should be taken into particular account. One of those problems is the degradation in students’ character due to weak character education in schools. Weak character education in schools results in a variety of negative behaviors that can harm students’ lives. Therefore, every school management needs to think about how to implement character education which will enable students to behave in manners and practice the norms and values in accordance with their own religion and culture.

One of the efforts that can be made is to implement and apply character education in schools which allow students to have manners, courtesy, and ethics in their social lives. This effort can be realized through several subjects such as religion, civic education, and literature. Through these subjects, it is expected that noble characters can be instilled within students’ selves.

The subject of literature in schools, especially in elementary schools, is aimed at instilling values such as religious, moral and ethical to students in order to build their character. These values are reflected in themes such as honesty, justice, democracy,

openness, piety, and compassion. These themes are implicitly absorbed within students' personality that indirectly shapes child's personality.

One of the sources of the literature subject in schools is a folktale. In a folktale, there are a number of wisdom values that may serve as a guide to shape a child's personality. However, not all folktales can be read by and taught to students since each region has its own different local wisdom (Sumayana, 2017: 26). This demonstrates that local wisdom in a particular region is not necessarily applicable in other regions as they are contrasting each other.

For example, the local wisdom contained in North Sumatra's folktale is not necessarily suitable to other regions in Indonesia. As a matter of fact, the local wisdom contained in particular ethnic groups folktale in North Sumatra is not necessarily suitable with other ethnic groups within the North Sumatra region itself (Isman, 2017). If the value is forcefully applied, it will certainly contradict with the values so far held by children. Therefore, a teacher must be more selective in choosing which folktale is suitable for literature learning material. By being selective in choosing the folktale as a material for literature learning, it will certainly provide a positive influence on building students' character.

Local wisdom can be interpreted as wise, full of wisdom, good value local ideas which are instilled and followed by members of the community (see also Sartini, 2004 and Sibarani, 2012: 112). Local wisdom is essentially the values applicable in a society. These values are believed to be true and serve as a guide in our daily behavior. Therefore, it is reasonable that Greertz (1983) states that local wisdom is an entity that determines human dignity in a community. This means that local wisdom which contains elements of intelligence, creativity and local knowledge of the elites and their society is the determining factor in civilization development.

The understanding of local wisdom as a nation's noble cultural value can be used as a source for building national character. Character human or the practice of local wisdom brings a highly significant impact on the success of an individual and even the success of a nation. The expected national character is the character that is based on prosperity and peace. With character education applied systematically and sustainably, it is expected that the student will be smart towards his emotion. This emotional intelligence is a valuable asset for children to prepare dealing with their future as someone with emotional intelligence face life challenges with ease and success (Sibarani, 2012: 148-149).

The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia is currently promoting the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) program which aims to build strong character within students and eventually lead to improving education quality. A teacher is a central figure in ensuring the success of PPK program as Effendy (2017) claims that one of the determining roles in the success of character education is the teachers. A teacher as the front liner is the party that must be able to promote education-based synergy which is composed of schools, communities, and families. Teachers must

be able to synergize these elements so that students' characters are built not only from the face-to-face session but also from their environment and society.

Students' character building cannot be ruled out from character education. Lickona (1991) puts forth that character education is the education where a person's personality is shaped through character education and is demonstrated through one's real actions, such as good behavior, honesty, responsibility, respect towards the rights of others, hard work, and so on. This character education is a system of cultivating character values to school citizens which includes the components of knowledge, awareness or willingness, and actions to implement these values.

Ramli (2003) puts forward that character education has the essence and meaning similar to that of moral education and good attitude education which aims to shape child's personality into being a good human being, a good citizen, and a good national. The criteria of good human beings, good citizens, and good national for the society or nation, in general, include having certain social values, which are highly influenced by the people' and nation's culture. Therefore, the essence of character education in the context of education in Indonesia is value education, that is the noble values education derived from the culture of the Indonesian nation itself, in an effort to build young generation personality.

Character education in schools cannot be ruled out from students' local culture as the local culture has wisdom manifested in the form of local wisdom.

Each ethnic and tribe has its own local wisdom, for example, the Batak tribe is known for their transparency, the Madurese is known for their high self-esteem, the Javanese is known for their subtlety, and the Chinese are known for their tenacity. Each of these ethnic groups has familiarity and friendliness with the natural environment that surrounds them. Therefore, the local wisdom in a particular region considered good is not necessarily perceived to be good in other regions with different cultures, customs, habits, and perspectives.

By implementing character education in schools, the students will have the spirit to love their originality. Students' love towards their region will realize regional resilience. Regional resilience is the ability of a region demonstrated by its citizens' ability to organize themselves in accordance with the concepts perceived to be true with a strong soul, high enthusiasm, and making use of nature wisely.

APPROACH & RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses qualitative methods since it seeks to explore, find, express, and explain about the local wisdom contained in the folktale "the Origin of Batu Bara People". The source of the data is taken from the book *Antologi Cerita Rakyat Batu Bara* (Anthology of Batu Bara Folktale) while the data of this study is local wisdom contained in the folktale "the Origin of Batu Bara People".

The data analysis technique used in this study is the model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984). Miles and Huberman (1984) put forth that the activities in qualitative data analysis include: (a) data collection, (b) data reduction, (c) data presentation, and (d) drawing conclusions and verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The folktale “the Origin of Batu Bara People” tells a story about a king named Datuk Balambangan who has a stunningly beautiful daughter proposed by four young men all at once. These four young men come from Pagaruyung Kingdom and are now employed at the palace. The king accepted the marriage proposal and ask the four young men to hold marriage party within 40 days. Then king's acceptance of the proposal is due to the fact that he tries to keep the four young men away from being disappointed and maintain a good relationship with the Pagaruyung Kingdom.

Since accepting the marriage proposal from the four young men, the king started to feel anxious and lost his appetite. The king performs tahajjud (midnight) prayers every night and prays that he is given a solution to the problem he is facing. Likewise, the king performs fasting on a daily basis. On the twentieth night, as the king finished performing the tahajjud prayer, the queen approached and reported that she has lost her pets including a goat, a monkey, and a dog. On the 38th night, the King had another dream and in the dream, his daughter has quadrupled and each of her is hugging with each of her fiance in a cave. In the last two nights, the queen reported to the king that her daughters have quadrupled with look-alike forms and faces. When the king looks at them, the four girls are bowing to the king. Then on, the four girls are married to the young men who made the marriage proposal.

When a banquet is held, the king wanted to prove which of the four girls is his biological daughter. Amongst the girls, there is one person who likes to eat the kings' vegetables and the king thought that this girl must be the trans building of his missing goat. There is another person who has the habit of scratching himself and monkeying around when eating. The King thought that his girl must be a transformation of a missing monkey he had kept since a baby. A girl who has a heavy eating habit means that she is the transformation of the king's gardener's missing dog. While another girl who shows a fairly normal eating habit is believed by the king to be his own biological daughter. These king's four girls are the forerunners of the ancestors of Batu Bara District who demonstrate the attitude and upbringing in accordance with their originality.

Based on the above story, the local wisdom found in the folktale “the Origin of Batu Bara People” are:

a. Wise and Prudent

The attitude of wisdom and prudence is apparent when the king received marriage proposals from the four young men. No one was rejected despite the fact that the king has only one daughter. The king feels sorry not to accept the proposal

from the four men and tries to keep the four young men away from being disappointed and is considerate towards their parents since those young men are originally from Pagaruyung. The king prudently and wisely overcomes the problems he faces. No one is disappointed with the actions taken and the policies made. All problems are faced prudently and wisely.

b. Devotion to Worship

King Balambangan is a devoted-to-worship king. When the king accepted the marriage proposal from the four young men, the king faces a serious problem. The king has only one daughter while there are four young men who make the marriage proposal. To overcome the problems, the king performs worships regularly (tahajjud prayer and fasting) and pray to Allah SWT so that he is given a solution to the problems faced. Finally, Allah SWT. responded to their prayers and brought along three princesses whose faces look exactly similar, thus the problems faced by the king is resolved.

c. Courtesy

The king's nickname is Datuk Balambangan. Datuk Balambangan originally comes from the Pagaruyung Kingdom. After graduation, Datuk Balambangan asked permission from his father to travel and hunt. In the end, Datuk Balambangan made it to the Batu Bara regency. While hunting, Datuk Balambangan made it to the Damanik Kingdom and rested for a few days thereat. Since Datuk Balambangan showed courtesy and good manner, the King Damanik allowed Balambangan to stay in the palace for as long as he wanted. Eventually, the King Damanik married his daughter to Datuk Balambangan.

d. Mutual cooperation

Local wisdom in the form of mutual cooperation is demonstrated when Datuk Balambangan moved to Kuala Indah (Kuala Tanjung) at the request of his wife. In Kuala Indah, Datuk Balambangan was appointed as the head of the local community and there on was promoted to be a king. Soon enough, his wife gave birth to a very beautiful daughter named Wang Gadiah / Puan Gadiah.

When a long dry season hit Kuala Indah, the residents worked together digging a well in a valley in order to get water. After deep digging, it was discovered that there was a large reddish yellow stone looking like coals of fire. The king was elated because he felt the stone was a lucky stone. The stone was kept well in the palace. Ever since Datuk Balambangan has gained fame and love by its people. His name then changed into Datuk Batu Bara.

e. Adaptation

One of the local wisdom contained in the folktale "the origin of Batu Bara people" is an adaptation. Datuk Balambangan who originally come from the Pagaruyung Kingdom was in no time accepted by King Damanik as he was quick to

adapt himself. Datuk Balambangan quickly adapted to the Kingdom of Damanik as a saying goes "Do as the Romans do".

This means that if someone lives in other people's region, he must quickly adjust himself in accordance with the applicable rules in the region. It would be inappropriate to break the rules and apply our own rules. If this is made to happen, it will certainly contradict with the rules that have been in force so far. As a consequence, it will trigger conflict in the community.

The local wisdom contained in the folktale "the origin of Batu Bara People" can be used to build students' character. The king's attitude of wisdom and prudence can also be taught to and instilled in students. In the future, when these students become leaders, they must be a prudent and wise leader. The leaders should not show arrogance attitude and disregard their people. All policies made must be pro-people and protect people's interests. Leaders with all their abilities and limitations should lead wisely and prudently so that they can bring peace and prosperity to society.

Likewise, the attitude of devout to worship can also be taught to and instilled in students so that they can show a devout to worship attitude. With devout to worship and pray, Allah the Almighty will facilitate our intention and provide solutions to different problems we are facing. Allah SWT. will grant ease and breakthrough to human beings if they diligently worship and pray. In addition, by obediently performing worships and prays, we will always remember Allah and abstain from bad qualities.

The attitude of courtesy shown by Datuk Balambangan can also serve as an example for students. A courteous, respectful and friendly attitude is a presiding attitude that must be possessed by everyone. With courtesy, an individual will get along easily and be accepted by others.

Another thing that can be taught to and instilled in students is mutual cooperation. The mutual cooperation that has long existed since the days of our ancestors has in fact taught humans to work together. In the society's life, this practice of mutual cooperation is found in many forms, such as cleaning up the environment, constructing roads and building houses of worship. Likewise in the school level, the practice of mutual cooperation is apparent when students clean the school environment together.

Another form of local wisdom that can shape students' character is an adaptation. This local wisdom needs to be instilled in and taught to students as adaptation teaches students to be able to adjust to the surrounding in which they live in. When a person lives in a particular region, he must be able to adjust himself according to the rules applicable in the region. A person must obey and comply with the rules applicable in a particular region so that he can be accepted by the local community. He should not apply his own rules that can potentially trigger conflict in the community.

If these values of wisdom are efficiently realized, it will certainly shape students' character in a much better way. Along the years, the students with poor characters are handled by instilling wisdom values contained in a folktale. Thus, our work has led us to conclude that a folktale can be used as a reference for building students' character.

CONCLUSION

Our study has highlighted that the forms of local wisdom found in the folktale “the origins of Batu Bara People” are wisdom and prudence, devout to worship, courtesy, mutual cooperation and adaptation. If the values of wisdom are efficiently realized, it will certainly build better students’ character. Over the years, it has been discovered that students with poor character are handled by instilling wisdom values contained in a folktale.

Thus, a folktale can be used as a reference for building students' character. However, not all values in a folktale can be read and taught as a different region has its own local wisdom and there are also values contained in a folktale in contrast with the beliefs held by students. If this is forced, it will certainly conflict with the values in so far held by children. Therefore, a teacher must be more selective in choosing a specific folktale to teach the values that are suitable as a literature learning material.

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