



Challenges and Opportunities for Character Education in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to discuss the challenges and opportunities of character education in the digital age. Building character in the digital age presents many different challenges and opportunities. Research shows that the digital age offers positive opportunities for implementing character education. Our challenge is how to teach students to navigate ethics in the digital age. Some of the challenges faced in character education in the digital age include balance, safety and security, cyberbullying, sexting, copyright, and plagiarism. Education policy makers should play an active role in the continuous development of digital learning to ensure effective implementation of digital learning.

INTRODUCTION

Character education is one of the important objectives of Indonesian national education. Article 3 of Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System (Sisdiknas) stipulates that the function of national education is to develop abilities, shape the character and civilisation of the nation in order to educate people's lives, develop the potential of learners. devoted to God Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, creative, independent and become responsible, democratic citizens. One of the keys to character education is having role models with character. At school, the role models for students in instilling personality values are teachers. Teachers with character will be able to show attitudes and behaviours that are in accordance with the norms and values of religious teachings in daily life so that students can imitate them. Because in principle, children are imitators. Students will easily develop their character by imitating or observing the teacher's behaviour.

The habits and examples given by teachers will give birth to students who have noble character. For example, students get used to the discipline of coming on time because they see their teachers always on time. When taking a test, students will try to be honest because they realise that the teacher prioritises honesty in everyday life. Similarly, children will get used to being polite because they will imitate their teachers who are always polite to everyone. Unfortunately, learning online through internet services does not always guarantee students are safe from the negative influence of the digital world. Digital media with all its freedom presents a variety of positive and negative information. Students who are not prepared to receive heavy and rich information are at risk of experiencing negative impacts that can erode their character. Bullying, pornography, promiscuity and other criminal offences are the result of the misuse of digital media among students. The digital age is characterised by the presence of technologies that can accelerate and increase the rate of knowledge circulation in the economy and society. The digital age can be seen as an evolution of an ever-evolving system where the rate of knowledge circulation is not only high but also increasingly beyond human control, making our lives increasingly difficult to manage. The social impact of the digital era is enormous and will become more pronounced as knowledge-based technologies become increasingly functional.

Understanding the digital age will help us build sustainable socio-economic relationships with both technology and advanced knowledge supported by technology. The digital age has dramatically changed the way we live and work by creating a knowledge-based society. Over time, the digital age will impact all areas of life, including education. The increasing availability of information technology and the Internet challenges our understanding of how education is organised and delivered, creating a new learning environment where isolated students are now connected to teachers around the world (Barbour and Reeves, 2009; Peng and Li-Wei, 2009). Computer- assisted distance learning between teachers and students via the Internet has become a teaching method capable of overcoming the problem of geographical distance (Bušelić, 2017).

It is undeniable that technology has completely transformed the world of education. There are concerns about student behaviour in the digital age, from cyberbullying to copyright infringement. Character education has been at the centre of education for thousands of years, both formally and informally (DeRoche & Williams, 2001; Edmonson et al., 2009; Lickona, 2009). Character education is important in achieving a democratic society that has a number of ideals such as respecting others, maintaining justice and equality, caring for social welfare and volunteering to help others. Since ancient times, character has been considered a recognisable word with a special meaning. In other words, when a person is considered to have good character, as is commonly understood, then he or she also has a number of other traits such as trustworthiness, integrity, enthusiasm and reliability.

Public support for the importance of character education began in the 1960s (Ohler, 2011). However, the advent of technology has forced character education methods to change drastically. The digital age has a huge impact on student behaviour, so character education must also adapt. The era of freedom and the rapid spread of information has made many people worried about the future of students' personalities. Schools began to informally implement character education for the digital age in the form of agreements to limit internet access for students and set virtual behaviour standards for students. That is not enough. We need to create a formal digital citizenship curriculum that addresses character education deeply, directly and comprehensively in the digital age. The main challenge is how to prepare learners for the rapid changes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This article discusses the challenges and opportunities of character education in the digital age. The author highlights that while digital technology provides various opportunities to enrich character learning, there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed, such as the balance of technology use, online safety, cyberbullying and digital ethical issues. The author also emphasises the important role of policy makers in developing an education curriculum that comprehensively covers digital aspects. In this article, the authors discuss in detail important aspects of character education in the digital age, such as the importance of understanding the risks and consequences of inappropriate use of technology, the role of teachers in guiding students about online etiquette, self-protection from cyberbullying and sexting, and the importance of understanding copyright and plagiarism.

The author also highlights that while digital character education offers various opportunities, there are still challenges that need to be addressed, such as unequal access to technology among students, the lack of internet infrastructure in some areas, and the importance of a holistic approach in digital character education curriculum development. This article provides a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities of character education in the digital era and emphasises the importance of a collaborative role between

the government, educational institutions and other stakeholders in dealing with the dynamics of education in the digital era.

The discussion of the article reveals some of the challenges faced in character education in the digital age, including issues of balance, safety and security, cyberbullying, sexting, copyright and plagiarism. On the other hand, the article also highlights the diverse opportunities offered by digital technology, including the potential to facilitate wider access, enhance the learning experience, and provide better possibilities for differentiation. Taking these views into account, the authors highlight the importance of a balanced approach between the benefits of digital technology and caution in dealing with possible negative impacts, while still ensuring that all students can access quality character education in the digital age.

METHODOLOGY

The following is the methodology used to research the challenges and opportunities of character education in the digital era:

1. Research Design

- This research uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in character education in the digital era.
- Data were collected through surveys, interviews and document analysis to gain in-depth insights into the perceptions of students, teachers and stakeholders regarding character education in a digital environment.

2. Data Collection

- Surveys will be conducted in various schools to collect data on students' experiences in using digital technology, their perceptions of the challenges faced, and their understanding of digital ethics.
- Interviews will be conducted with teachers, parents and education experts to obtain different perspectives on character education in the digital era, as well as effective strategies to overcome the challenges faced.
- Document analysis will involve reviewing character education policies in different educational institutions and related literature to understand existing frameworks and comparisons between best practices in different educational settings.

3. Data Analysis

- The data collected will be analysed thematically to identify patterns, trends and relevant findings related to the challenges and opportunities of character education in the digital era.
- A quantitative analysis approach will be used to analyse the survey data, while a qualitative approach will be used to analyse the interview data and document analysis.

4. Interpretation of Results

- The results of the analysis will be interpreted to identify appropriate solutions to overcome the challenges faced in character education in the digital era.

- The findings will be used to develop recommendations and strategies that can be implemented in character education curricula, teacher training and education policies to increase awareness and understanding of digital ethics.
5. Verification
 - The research results will be validated through consultations with education experts, teachers and relevant stakeholders to ensure the accuracy of the findings and the suitability of the proposed recommendations to practical needs in the field.
 6. Dissemination
 - The results of the research will be disseminated through scientific publications, seminars and workshops to broaden the understanding and awareness of the importance of character education in the digital era, as well as effective strategies to face the challenges.

RESULT AND DISSCUSION

1. Opportunities

The 21st century requires an education system that emphasises skills and competencies for the future, including creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication. Digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities to complement, enrich and transform education to meet these new challenges. In addition, information and communication technology (ICT) is an important tool to facilitate equitable and inclusive access to education, narrow the learning gap, and open up new perspectives for teachers and the profession, improve the quality and meaning of learning and improve the management of education and government.

Learning characters digitally actually helps students learn prescribed skills. However, there is still a lack of teacher understanding of digital learning. Learning characters digitally is often just learning to use digital tools. This is an oversimplification and fails to understand a concept. Digital learning is an attempt to enhance learning beyond the use of digital tools in the classroom. Therefore, digital learning cannot be a trend of using digital tools but a responsibility to improve the quality of learning.

The concept of digital character learning is complicated because there are so many variables involved. In short, learning numerical characters can enhance the learning experience, save teachers' time, allow teachers to tailor learning to students' needs, and help track students' progress, provide transparency about the learning process to all stakeholders, among others. Among the many benefits of digital learning, most teachers agree that digital learning has a positive impact on student development and achievement.

The impact of technology on character education is very positive as technology empowers people and enables them to solve problems more effectively and live better lives. Character education is not just about learning how to be safe or manage risk; it is about maximising positive prospects for individuals and society, living values that help improve human and humane living conditions even in the most difficult circumstances (Jolls, 2008).

Digital learning offers great opportunities for success in character education. There are several opportunities in digital learning compared to traditional learning. Firstly, digital learning can reduce many geographical barriers. Students can now access online videos that provide teaching on various topics at different skill levels and participate in video conferences with teachers in different locations. Secondly, the advent of touchscreen technology has enabled young children to engage in technology-assisted teaching. Before tablets, it was difficult for preschool, kindergarten and even primary school students to learn to use educational software because they had to use a mouse or keyboard. Today there are hundreds of apps that can effectively help children access early reading, writing and maths skills. Thirdly, advances in artificial intelligence technology now allow teachers to differentiate teaching styles, provide additional support and developmentally appropriate materials for students whose knowledge and skills are much lower or higher than school-level standards. The latest "smart" tutoring systems are not only able to assess students' current weaknesses but also diagnose why students make certain mistakes. This technology allows teachers to better reach students who score below the average in their class, potentially benefiting students with low academic ability.

2. Challenge

Technological innovation moves so fast that we often don't have time to consider unintended consequences. As a result, personality issues such as cyberbullying and sexting are difficult to address because they come out of nowhere. Our challenge is to find ways to teach students how to navigate ethics in the rapidly evolving digital age in a conscious, proactive and thoughtful manner. Some of the challenges faced in character education in the digital age include balance, safety and security, cyberbullying, sexting, copyright and plagiarism.

The aspect of balance requires teachers to understand the past, present and possible future impacts of technology. There must be a balance between opportunity and responsibility, empowerment and caution, realising individual and community interests and global well-being. Many people develop behaviours that reflect the overuse of technology (Charlton & Danforth, 2007). Uncontrolled use of technology can affect and condition personal relationships and interactions, especially for young people who need to be constantly connected to the Internet or other people. People fear being disconnected from their peers.

The safety and security aspect requires teachers to be fully aware that online actions can cause harm to themselves or others. Safety and security issues include protecting privacy, respecting the privacy of others, detecting inappropriate online sites (such as pornography and others for children). Online security is a challenge that can determine the stability and smooth running of the system itself. Despite the increasing sensitivity and attention to Internet use, the lack of knowledge, information and care on the part of users leaves them vulnerable to risks ranging from data theft to digital identity.

Training programmes are needed to reverse this situation and encourage good habits in the use of technology and networks.

This aspect of cyberbullying requires teachers to understand the potential adverse effects of cyberbullying and how it violates the ethical principles of personal integrity, compassion and responsible behaviour. Cyberbullying, both in and out of school, thanks to technology, can continuously invade the privacy of children or young people who are victims of bullying. Recipients and perpetrators experience various forms of cyberbullying (including cyberbullying, sexting, trolling, and playful slapping) that disrupt their psychological and personal development (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). The issue of sexting requires teachers to understand the negative consequences of using mobile phones to take and send sexually explicit images of themselves or others.

The aspects of copyright and plagiarism require teachers to teach respect for the intellectual property rights of others and think about the legality and ethics of using materials online without permission. Using other people's ideas, words, and works as your own is called plagiarism. However, plagiarism is not always intentional or malicious. Sometimes it is done unconsciously and is due to a lack of prior knowledge.

Students must learn to utilise technology and the internet effectively, creatively and wisely. They will learn not only how to use them but also when and why, with a sense of safety, community, fairness and responsibility. Students will learn how to use technology and the Internet safely and responsibly. Schools should provide a safe environment that encourages mutual respect and motivates students to learn and act responsibly in local and online communities. Education is a shared responsibility of the student's family, school and community.

The importance of digital character learning as a solution to educational challenges and the growing number of students learning online have increased the need to study more closely the factors that influence students' learning character approach to digital education. There is currently much debate about whether digital learning provides students with better learning capabilities than traditional teaching. There is a need to show whether the advantages of digital character learning outweigh the disadvantages and whether digital learning makes a valuable contribution to students' character education.

On the other hand, many researchers, scholars and education policy makers oppose digital education because it can negatively impact students' learning, achievement, socialisation and motivation. Socialisation is a serious issue with digital learning because in conventional education, learners must learn to collaborate with others and internalise the norms and values needed to live in a civilised society. Digital learning is considered to be lacking in teaching the norms and values of society, so the virtual learning environment is less able to socialise the values that students expect to be relevant to conventional learning. In conventional schools, principles such as honesty, respect for self and others, responsibility, and citizenship are often reinforced through face-to-face relationships between students and teachers and among students. As

Nguyen (2015) points out, socialisation opportunities in digital learning are reduced due to fewer peers and less face-to-face contact with others. In addition, web culture is seen as an isolated culture and therefore, by encouraging students to pursue distance education, it causes a loss of community, community involvement and social connection. Furthermore, in digital learning that uses asynchronous technologies such as email, teachers cannot observe students' emotional reactions as there are no cues such as facial expressions and body language.

In addition, student interactions in traditional classrooms encourage the development of critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration skills. While many digital learning programmes have developed online forums or discussion boards for students to communicate and share ideas, they only partially replace the interaction provided in the classroom with teachers and other students. Interaction in the online classroom is unlike that in the traditional classroom in many ways, and some students have difficulty in the virtual learning environment because the intimacy of student-teacher and student- learner interaction is reduced and many communication methods are lost.

Students who study digital characters may not have more opportunities to empathise with others than their peers in traditional education. As some researchers have pointed out, not all students are suited to digital learning and it is clear that some students will not thrive and succeed in digital learning, perhaps because digital learning requires more student independence and responsibility than traditional courses. In addition, students who take part in digital learning must be motivated to learn. However, not all students are motivated enough to join a digital learning programme. They are familiar with the classroom environment and real interaction with teachers to develop and learn the course content. In addition, self-discipline is also necessary for students to complete their digital learning. Students who do not manage their time well are often not very successful in digital learning.

Good internet infrastructure is an important requirement for successful digital character learning. In terms of equipment, teachers generally have enough equipment to cater for digital teaching. However, there is a problem of inadequate internet network in every region. Digital character learning requires a good internet connection. Therefore, teachers who live in the suburbs cannot teach digitally to the fullest. Another challenge is that students come from very different backgrounds and have very different resources, opportunities and support outside of school. While some students may be able to keep up with the pace of digital learning well, others do not have access to quality learning. In general, the most economically disadvantaged will find it difficult to engage in digital learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Building character in the digital age presents many different challenges and opportunities. Research shows that the digital age offers positive opportunities for implementing character education. Character education is not a slogan or a subject, but a mission rooted in daily school life. Promoting character education is not just an act of dedication but also an action plan for practice. Together, parents, teachers and organisers as stakeholders must encourage students to embody these good values in their lives. Digital character learning is more than a trend. The challenge is how to provide high-quality learning opportunities for all students to improve how and what they learn without being influenced by origin, geography or economic situation. Education policy makers must play an active role in the continuous development of digital learning to ensure effective implementation of digital learning. Countries with strong digital learning strategies will move forward to help students reach their full potential in the digital age.

FURTHER AND RESEARCH

This research still has limitations so further research needs to be done on this topic "Challenges and Opportunities for Character Education in the Digital Era".

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