

THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR THE NAHDLATUL ULAMA ORGANIZATION IN TRAINING ITS CADRES AGAINST SECULARISM

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Abstract. Character education is a support in creating quality civilized education, especially for Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) cadres. Character education is a crucial element in creating quality human resources who are intellectually intelligent and intelligent in action. NU itself has a character education for its cadres to always embody Pancasila values and Islamic values in an applicable form in the field as a guide for their lives in carrying out their daily life activities to fight against the growing secularism amidst the constellation of people's lives. This article uses the literature study method which consists of searching articles from various sources that support theoretically through SAGE Journal, Google Scholar, and supporting books to perfect the results of writing this article. The results of this study will holistically describe the role of character education developed by Nahdlatul Ulama for its cadres in totally opposing the presence of secularism. Character education from Nahdlatul Ulama becomes a magic shield for its cadres to destroy the presence of secularism. The conclusion from this research is that character education from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) for its cadres is a weapon against secularism and of course with this character education a religious and nationalist character will be created as proof that if humans have character, then the quality of education can be said to be complete and successful.

Keywords: Character Education, Nahdlatul Ulama Cadres, Secularism

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of education can be measured by the extent to which individuals possess strong character. Character refers to the moral and personal qualities that distinguish one individual from another (Sofyan Mustoip, Muhammad Japar, & Zulela Ms, 2018: 46). From a philosophical standpoint, the primary goal of education is to shape the morals of individuals, rather than simply imparting knowledge. In supporting the educational process, character is of utmost importance. Focusing solely on knowledge would render humans no different from demons, who possess high intelligence but lack moral fiber. Character education is crucial in developing a high-quality educational process. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has designed a character education program for its cadres that aligns with religious and national beliefs. Cultivating morals in accordance with religious and national guidelines helps to prevent NU cadres from embracing secularism.

Providing quality education is a complex undertaking, partly because the concept of quality in education is constantly evolving (Robert Laurie, Yuko, Rosalyn, & Charles, 2016: 227). The quality of education should be a major concern in producing intellectually and behaviorally intelligent individuals. NU's character education program aims to reshape the character of its cadres and the wider national community, thereby ensuring the quality of education. NU was founded on January 31, 1926, and continues to exist today with millions of followers. It is not an exaggeration to say that NU is the largest organization in the world. According to Imroatul Fatihah (2018: 3), two factors determine NU's longevity. Firstly, NU consistently adheres to Islamic traditions. Secondly, NU has a positive attitude towards the changes happening around it. Of these two factors, NU places greater emphasis on the former, namely upholding the

traditions of the Prophets and the clergy as their inheritors. NU directed its movement towards the education sector by choosing pesantren as the form and substance of education, but it has been expanding into general education in a positive way.

The quality of education produced through character education is demonstrated by how educators integrate character values in students. Integrating character values entails teaching commendable moral values within the learning process (M. Mahfud, 2014: 132). NU's Islamic boarding schools and general education programs are constantly reconstructing the character of its cadres and followers, aiming to instill noble morals and ward off secularism.

This research article serves as a concrete reference medium in the field of education for all stakeholders involved in shaping their students noble character and understanding the meaning of character education in NU, which is instrumental in preventing secularism. The concept of secularism goes against both Indonesian state ideology and religious values. This research offers a renewal in the form of character education capital implemented by NU in condemning secularism, thereby ensuring the provision of high-quality education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 The Essence of Character Education

Character education is a conscious and systematic effort to instill and cultivate good values in individuals, with the aim of humanizing and improving their character and intellect, and ultimately creating a generation of knowledgeable and morally upright individuals who can contribute positively to their surrounding environment. According to Zubaedi, "*character education is the deliberate effort to cultivate virtue that is objectively good human qualities that are good for the individual person and good for the whole society*" (Sofyan Mustoip, Muhammad Japar & Zulela Ms, 2018: 54).

This definition is further supported by Lickona, who defines "*character education as the deliberate effort to develop virtues that are good for the individual and good for society*" (Sofyan Mustoip, Muhammad Japar & Zulela Ms, 2018: 54). Therefore, character education is a systematic and deliberate process aimed at developing virtues that have a positive impact on both the individual and the social environment. It is not an instant process, but one that requires continuous effort and habituation. Character education is an essential component of achieving high-quality education.

In Indonesia, the education system is governed by Law Number 20 of 2003, which aims to improve the national education system and ensure the needs for quality human resources are met (Sony, R. Dudy, Ramadhan P, & M. Fedryansyah, 2016: 200). It is clear that individuals with good character are required in the current era to facilitate the process of quality education. Character education is not limited to schools but extends to the home and community. NU, in particular, emphasizes the character of its followers and cadres as a provision to resist the presence of secularism in people's lives.

1.2 A Brief History of the Birth of the Nahdlatul Ulama Organization (NU)

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which means the Awakening of Ulama, is an Islamic mass organization established by Islamic boarding school Ulama under the leadership of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari in Surabaya on January 31, 1926. Together with other clerical figures such as K.H. Wahab Hasbullah, K.H. Bisri Syamsuri, K.H. Ma'shum Lasem, and several other kiai, NU was founded as a forum for the struggle against all forms of colonialism and for the independence of the Republic of Indonesia from Dutch and Japanese colonialists. Furthermore, NU actively carried out its da'wah to maintain the unity of the Republic of Indonesia within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Amin Farih, 2016: 252). How is NU in such a big role in fighting for Indonesian independence and maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia..

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) at every step always prioritizes the interests of the nation and state and is always based on the basis of Islamic shari'at and Islamic values, it is also based on the values of the Indonesian state ideology and a high spirit of nationalism, we can see how this Nahdlatul Ulama's background was born, how big

was its role in fighting for Indonesian independence and maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. NU led by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari highly upholds national values, nationalism based on Islamic law.

1.3 Secularism

Terminologically, the notion of secularism can be taken from what is written in the Webster dictionary in Mursal (2014: 198), namely *"A system of doctrines and practices that rejects any form of religious faith and worship"*. In simple terms, in terms of terminology, it is a movement that calls for worldly life based on material things. It is this material principle that further encourages them to keep religion away from their lives, including in matters of politics and the state. The next principle becomes the shared ideology of Westerners in viewing the relationship between politics (the state) and religion. In fact, this ideology is not only to be practiced by themselves, but also to try their best to socialize this idea in the Islamic world.

The concept of secularism has originated since the beginning of the European Enlightenment, after power was under the hands of the hegemonic power of the Catholic Christian church in the middle Ages (5th – 15th century AD). Where church and state collaborate to dominate all aspects of people's lives. Under the reins of church power, policies made by unscrupulous clergy are no longer in accordance with the spirit of humanity and the development of the times. This makes human life feel like they are in a dark world. The implication is that people have the courage to rebel against the arbitrary church regime. The culmination of all this was the birth of a rebellion against church power which led to the creation of the enlightenment era of European society. The theory of secularism which recognizes the existence of deviations from religious teachings carried out by church power in the name of religion which has been brought excessively into the realm of politics and the state has begun to gain a place in the realm of life and politics.

Going too far means that this secularism is what NU is trying to break, that NU members and cadres will never recognize secularism as a way of life in carrying out social and national life.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach to literacy studies. By using this approach the researcher believes that it will be a research support for the researcher, through this approach he will describe in detail to the point of conical to dissect the research that will be examined.

Qualitative research method is a research method used to examine natural object conditions, where the researcher is a key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out by triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2020: 9). The type of research to be planned is to use a literacy study or literature study by first describing it comprehensively and then conducting field research and then analyzing it as a whole to find suggestions given by researchers.

This article uses the literature study method which consists of searching articles from various sources that support theoretically through SAGE Journal, Google Scholar, and supporting books to perfect the results of writing this article. To strengthen the results of this study, researchers will also conduct interviews with one of the West Java NU cadres. This research will reveal how the NU organization totally rejects the notion of secularism to reside in the bodies of NU followers and cadres.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Secularism is indeed a serious problem at this time and must be eliminated immediately because it is not in accordance with the guidelines for the life of the Indonesian nation, namely Pancasila which mandates as stated explicitly in the first precept, namely Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa, which orders that all elements of the Indonesian nation have religious beliefs in their life principles to be used as a bridge for them to avoid immoral life. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) itself is serious about facing the

issue of secularism which has pervaded the spirit of every human being in the world today, therefore NU has designed everything with the concept of character education so that its cadres have strong nationalist and religious character as a solid bulwark in expelling secularism. As has been said that the quality of education is said to be successful as seen from the maturity of the character of the students in line with what was said by Waini Rasyidin (2016: 124) It is impossible or impossible for the quality of education such as welfare and democracy to be realized without quality education and human development. Quality human development here is human beings who have commendable character that can provide long-term effects for the advancement of education and NU is currently packaging its cadres to have noble character through the concept of character education to produce reliable quality human resources.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) itself is the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia and has a long history of supporting character education in society. NU has developed a unique character education approach that includes religious, cultural, and social aspects. NU views that good character must be based on strong religious values, such as honesty, integrity, and devotion to God. Apart from that, NU also promotes cultural values such as local wisdom, empathy, and humility as part of character education. NU has also been active in supporting social programs that aim to assist communities in building good character, such as free education programs, social assistance programs, and skills training programs. The results of the observations that researchers made on the concept of character education developed by NU were not only based on observations in the field, but the observations of these researchers were reinforced by the opinion of Imroatul Fatihah (2018: 16) who said that in organizational efforts it was noted that NU was determined to provide education in accordance with Islamic values to form pious, virtuous and knowledgeable Muslims. This means that NU has from a long time ago prioritized its cadres and congregations to have virtuous and knowledgeable characters. complete destruction of life.

True character is related to moral strength and has a positive not neutral connotation, therefore people with character are people who have certain positive moral qualities (Kokom K & Didin S, 2017: 2). NU has always demanded its cadres and followers to have high quality moral character and this is evident at this point in time when the general public believes in the presence of NU as a place or place for people to seek knowledge and have high morals. The community strongly adheres to the stance that NU is a place where people can have noble morals in accordance with Islamic law and the state ideology, namely Pancasila. Ilham Muharrom, who is an NU cadre who is an interview researcher, said that NU from the beginning until now will never fade in the hearts of the people that NU will always be the ideal place for the best sons and daughters of the nation to have noble morals and have broad insights and this is evident with NU. currently building Islamic boarding schools and universities as media for cadre formation. The two places are in great demand, it is noted that there are already tens of thousands of students and students studying at NU's auspices. NU's existence in spreading goodness in matters of religion and nationality will be a real contribution to the progress of the country and the advancement of the quality of education in Indonesia. Educational Establishments can be effective moral teachers when they represent communities that are morally homogeneous (William J.H., 2017: 34). It is true that educational institutions, whether they are homes, schools, or the community environment, must be effective places in reconstructing morality properly, and this is in line with NU's consistent goal of maintaining the integrity of the country by producing cadres and people with good morals for the survival of quality education.

Cadreization in NU starts from the elementary level, namely at the level of Islamic boarding schools or madrasas as the main media in the development of character education developed by NU. After completing their education at the Islamic boarding school or madrasah level, NU students can continue their education at the Islamic higher education level, such as the State Islamic Religious Institute (IAIN) or State Islamic University (UIN), or to public schools. At the Islamic tertiary level, NU students will receive coaching and training to become strong and qualified NU cadres. NU

students also often hold religious activities, such as lectures, seminars, and discussions, which aim to develop the religious and scientific understanding of NU students. This religious development will certainly make NU cadres always remember God at all times and this is very suitable for expelling and even condemning the existence of secularism that is currently sweeping the lives of the wider community. Character education at NU is highlighted through recruitment of cadres where NU cadres always receive intensive coaching to become human beings with character. With the capital of strong religious and national character, NU cadres will always reflect on their lives so that they are in line with the religious orders and ideology of Pancasila. Of course, seeing the concept of NU character education for its cadres through a regeneration pattern is a slap in the face for individuals who will spread secularism in this country that NU cadres will always obey religious teachings and the state constitution to condemn the existence of secularism.

After graduating from tertiary institutions, NU cadres can continue their cadres at the branch level, whether at the regional, provincial or national levels. At each branch level, NU cadres will receive further training and coaching as well as be given tasks and responsibilities to manage the NU organization at that level. At the national level, NU has a central management consisting of various institutions such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Central Executive Council (DPP), and others. NU cadres who have successfully pursued their careers to this level are usually highly skilled and trained in the religious, social and political fields, and have extensive networks within the community. Overall, the pattern of formal cadres in Nahdlatul Ulama is fairly systematic and structured and involves various stages and institutions that aim to produce quality NU cadres who are ready to take on the leadership mandate in the future. Of course, with the NU's formal cadre pattern which is an integral part of character education developed by NU, it can produce cadres who are reckoned with by the state and will certainly reject secularism that tries to disrupt the stability of today's society.

Secularism is a major disturbance to the progress of education and the state, and therefore it must be eradicated as soon as it eradicates corruption. People who have fallen into secularism in their lives will find dead ends and lose direction, because they do not have ideal goals like normal people in life. Normal people in their lives must have a strong belief that religion and state cannot be separated and will always have coherence at any time. State affairs will always be related to religion, because the state in the goals set forth in its constitution will definitely prioritize the affairs of the people and that is in religious teachings in general. People's affairs will be the main topic of discussion in religion, therefore if people adhere to secularism by separating religion and state at any time they will not find a bright path in their lives. Nahdlatul Ulama is very strong in opposing the growing secularism in Indonesia and this is shown in how it trains its cadres to always practice the values of goodness as a solid foundation so that they forbid anything in their minds to participate in secularism.

The various educational facilities that exist in the NU tradition emphasize that NU's role in education in Indonesia is very large and it is undeniable that NU always produces reliable cadres that the state can rely on by upholding morality as a result of character education at NU for its cadres. The concept of character education developed by NU itself is crucial for the quality of education, because education can be said to be of high quality if there is a significant change in students in the form of morals that are originally not good to be good. Secularism will kill everyone's character and can make education lack quality or quality, therefore NU always emphasizes on NU cadres to always hold to the principle of life to have religious beliefs as a guide for life in saving them in this world and in the hereafter.

If you look at the early emergence of NU, NU's goals and intentions in the 1926 Statutes were to endeavor to increase the number of madrasas based on the Islamic religion and to pay attention to matters relating to mosques, suraus and boarding schools, as well as to the thing about orphans and the poor (Imroatul Fatimah, 2018: 14). In line with this statement, it can be concluded that NU is a social organization that prioritizes Islamic education and teaching for the future Indonesian people. Even

in its movement NU focuses on the field of education in addition to social and economic. As for NU's commitment to education when it became a political party and active in practical political activities it still makes education part of its movement, at least the words "to enhance the quality of education and teaching of Islam" are still listed in its statutes. Then NU formed a special section that manages the education sector under the name *Al-Ma'arif* whose job is to make laws and educational programs in educational institutions under the auspices of NU. NU's direction of movement will not be separated from eradicating ignorance in this country by always relying on the education it produces. Seeing NU's consistency above further strengthens that the concept of NU's character education is to make its cadres have noble morals according to the recommendations of Islam and Pancasila as the starting point for the establishment of an Indonesian state. Having character according to religion and state ideology will make NU cadres stronger in counteracting secularism. Secularism is an ideology that must be destroyed, because it will create a danger to society if it is tempted to become its principle of life. Secularism will make a solid state collapse and will create chaos in the life of society, nation and state.

NU's role in the field of character education had been implemented before the Indonesian government rolled out the idea of character education through the ministries of education, culture, research and technology. In fact, before this nation was established or independent, character education had already been carried out within the NU educational environment. This is because NU was born before the State of Indonesia. NU character education can be called moral education that has been practiced by Rasulullah SAW. This is because NU's character education does not only have a purely human dimension, but also includes a divine dimension. In contrast to the West which only emphasizes its humanist dimension and is free from divine values. Divine and Human Values are a protector for mankind to avoid fatal mistakes that can cause them to live astray. Pursuing the world is indeed important, but matters of the hereafter are more important. Human existence in this world is only temporary, not as eternal as life in the afterlife. Divine and human values play an important role so that secularism does not grow on this earth. However, matters of religion and state will never be separated at any time, so this secularism is a very vague understanding in describing the natural course of human life. Humans who live without religion, their lives are never clear and we can see that now many people live without a purpose, because they do not believe in God's miracles for human life.

Secularism is poison to life and must be cleaned up immediately so that its existence is not even visible. Humans who believe in secularism, surely they will live abnormally. Nahdlatul Ulama through character education will always protect its cadres and followers so that they kill secularism in their minds, because secularism will damage the order of human life in the present and in the future.

CONCLUSION

Explicitly and clearly the benchmark for the quality of education is a mature character change. Nahdlatul Ulama places great emphasis on its cadres and followers having a religious and nationalist character as a solid stronghold to avoid misguided ways of life. Secularism is a dogma that is contrary to the constellation of people's lives in Indonesia, because after all religious affairs and state affairs will always go together to form a collaborative principle of positive life for humanity. Nahdlatul Ulama emphasizes the concept of character education for cadres and people through its formal cadres with positive religious and national studies and deepen the teachings of Islam as a protector against secularism. Secularism is poison for humans, someone who has been carried away by secularism will experience strange symptoms in their life. They will commit acts that are prohibited by religion and the state constitution, such as radicalism, terrorism, even LGBT. NU through character education has succeeded in transforming the condition of education in Indonesia to be of high quality and to be taken into account in the international arena.

Character education was carried out by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) long before the birth of this de facto and de jure Indonesian state, because NU was born when this

country was still struggling in fighting for independence. The presence of NU in Indonesia has made many concrete contributions with concern for the world of education. Nahdlatul Ulama was born to provide a portrait of a new direction for the nation and state to be respected by other nations, an effective method so that this nation can be respected by other nations is to boost the quality of education evenly throughout the region and strengthen the belief to strongly reject secularism that stops in the heart and thought. Etched in the life line of Nahdlatul Ulama cadres to always draw closer to God and the Messenger to give birth to peace in life and lead to a perfect human being.

Nahdlatul Ulama's contribution to the world of education is by expanding in every region to build educational institutions not only Islamic boarding schools, but also many public education programs created by NU to help generations of people continue the baton of the fundamental da'wah struggle. Da'wah is carried out to build morals starting for NU cadres and followers to always remember God at all times so that they are free from the temptations of secularism which will make them eternally lost in the abyss of destruction. Religion and the state are principles integrated with each other and cannot be separated. If there is a separation between the principles of religion and the state, it will injure the people and themselves.

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