

## Building Students' Characters by Integrating Local Cultural Values into Social-Emotional Learning

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### 1. Abstract

Social-emotional learning linked to local cultural values will be more meaningful to students. In this learning process, students are not only taught social-emotional competencies but cultural values are also introduced to support their understanding of the subject matter. In this discussion, the integration of local cultural values in the form of Tamansiswa educational teachings and other teachings based on Javanese culture with the learning of social-emotional competencies based on the CASEL 5 framework is discussed. The competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. In the practice of social-emotional learning in schools, teachers are advised to explore local cultural values that are appropriate for the region or country in which they teach. Integrating these cultural values is very significant for students as it can help them understand and master the social-emotional competencies being taught while understanding their own culture. Some examples of Tamansiswa educational teachings and other teachings in Javanese culture discussed in this paper are *Tri-N (Niteni, Niroake, Nambahi)*, *Tringa (Ngerti, Ngrasa, Nglakoni)*, *Neng-Ning- Nung-Nang, Asah, Asih, Asuh, Tri-Ko, Mong Kinemong, Tepa Selira, Crah Agawe Bubrah, Rukun Agawe Santosa, Ana Catur Mungkur, and Aja Mung Syokur Payu*. We hope these examples can inspire other teachers to explore local cultural values relevant to their own regions.

**Keywords:** *social-motional learning, social-emotional competence, local cultural values, Tamansiswa educational teaching, CASEL 5*

## **2. Introduction**

Enculturation is a learning process in which an individual comes to know about the rules, customs, skills and values of the society. The purpose of learning this culture is to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to live in society and behave entirely according to its prevailing customs, traditions, and norms. The Enculturation process can take place in the family, school, and community. In this process, the family is considered the first and most important place where children are introduced by their parents to the culture prevalent in the family and the local community. In the family, children are introduced to good habits, manners, and ethics. In addition, the enculturation process also takes place at schools, where students are formally introduced to attitudes, values, behaviours, knowledge, and skills by teachers. Similarly, in the community, children learn to adapt to prevailing rules, customs, and values of the society. Through this process, the younger generation can inherit and preserve the culture in which they were raised, so that they grow up to be cultured children and local cultural values are preserved.

This discussion highlights the enculturation that takes place in schools. Unlike enculturation in the family environment, enculturation in schools is formal and well-structured. In the process of enculturation in school, teachers play a very important role because they are not only teaching but also responsible for educating students. They not only provide students with academic knowledge, but also teach them values, rules, and religious and cultural norms so that they develop good character and behavior. In this way, a balance is created between the students' academic competencies and their social-emotional competencies.

Since the purpose of this enculturation is to shape students' character, it is very appropriate in the context of learning to integrate the local cultural values in which students live into character education. Therefore, teachers should try to explore which

local cultural values are relevant to character education and integrate them well into the learning materials. For example, in Indonesia, which is composed of many tribes, teachers can adapt cultural values that are appropriate for their particular region. Meanwhile, teachers abroad can do it in the same way.

Indonesia is currently introducing a new curriculum, called *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Freedom Curriculum), which was developed with the teachings of Tamansiswa in mind. In this curriculum, character education is intensified under the term social-emotional learning (SEL). In practice, this learning can take place in three ways, separate from the subject matter, integrated into specific subjects, and in the form of school culture in the form of habituation.

Based on teacher training, social-emotional learning is based on the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework. This is an organization that advocates for the implementation of SEL based on research findings and scientific evidence related to the implementation of SEL. In the framework of CASEL, SEL includes five components, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Through this learning process, students are expected to develop a healthy identity, manage their emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, build and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

Mastery of social-emotional competence is important not only for the short-term well-being of the school, but also for the long-term advancement of student achievement. Several studies have shown that schools that promote social and emotional learning are critical to students' academic, social, personal, and professional success (Durlak et.al., 2011). Students who have good social-emotional competences tend to have better academic performance, socialise well, find jobs more easily, and enjoy healthy and happy

lives. Actually, character education has long been practised in schools but needs to be taken more seriously in light of current learning conditions, which in some places have changed significantly. One of these changes is due to the rapid flow of information that is a feature of global life. Today, students can easily access information from various media such as television, internet, and social media. Good information, e.g., about advances in science, technology, and art, is certainly beneficial to children, while information about various forms of crime, promiscuity, domestic violence, bullying, etc., has a negative impact on them. This is why structured and sustained social-emotional learning is so important.

The purpose and importance of social-emotional learning described above are in line with the educational concept of Ki Hadjar Dewantara (the founder of the Tamansiswa Foundation, the first Indonesian Minister of Education, who is also considered the father of national education). According to him, education is a process of enculturation aimed at instilling and preserving in the new generation noble values that constitute the value of human life. According to him, education can take place in three places, namely the family, the school and the community. Therefore, he called it *Tri Pusat Pendidikan* (Three Centres of Education).

One of the educational concepts introduced by Tamansiswa is known as the *Among* system. "*Among*" is a Javanese word meaning '*ngemong*' or '*momong*,' meaning '*nurturing*.'" Thus, according to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, a teacher is comparable to a nanny. The *Among* system is an educational system that has a family spirit and is based on nature and independence. Nature is used as a condition for making progress as fast and as well as possible, while independence is a condition for enlivening and mobilizing the inner and outer forces of the students so that they can develop a strong or tough personality and think and act independently. In terms of the nature, the teacher is

compared to a farmer whose job is to nurture his plants so that they grow well and produce the best possible results. The farmer will not try to influence his plants to turn into other plants, for example, rice plants will not turn into corn or cassava. Similarly, a teacher will try to support and train his students well so that they grow and develop according to their nature or talents. He will not try to change them according to his wishes. In this way, students can learn with joy and realize their dreams in life.

Related to the above description, this paper discusses (1) what Tamansiswa educational teachings as local cultural values which can be integrated into social-emotional learning and (2) how the teachings are implemented to match the expected social-emotional competencies based on CASEL framework.

### **3. Review of Related Literature**

In his book entitled *Primitive Culture* (1871), a British anthropologist, Edward Taylor, stated that culture or civilization is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society (cited in Elif, 2022: 239). In line with the opinion, most sociologists agreed to say that culture consists of the values, beliefs, systems of language, communication, and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective.

Kluckhohn (in Krishnamurty and Venkataraman, 2005) said that a value is an explicit or implicit notion of desirability that characterizes an individual or group and that influences the choice of available courses of action, means, and ends. Meanwhile, Frey (1994) defined values as learned, relatively enduring, emotionally charged, epistemologically grounded and represented moral conceptualizations that help us make judgments and prepare us to act. In other words, the priorities we set and the choices

we make are significantly based on the values we hold. Thus, it can be concluded that cultural values are shared values, beliefs, art, morals, language and communication systems, and practices, explicit or implicit, individual or group, that help us make judgments and prepare for action.

Tamansiswa or *Perguruan Nasional Tamansiswa* (in Dutch: *Nationaal Onderwijs Instituut Tamansiswa Hoofdzetd*) was founded on July 3, 1922 in Yogyakarta by Ki Hadjar Dewantara. According to his vision, Tamansiswa is an institution of cultural struggle and community development that uses education in its broadest sense as a means to build an orderly, peaceful, happy and resilient society. Currently, Tamansiswa has several educational institutions throughout Indonesia: kindergartens (*Taman Indriya*), elementary schools (*Taman Muda*), junior high schools (*Taman Dewasa*), senior high schools (*Taman Madya*), vocational high schools (*Taman Karya Madya*), and universities (Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Tamansiswa University, etc.).

The educational teachings of Tamansiswa, which are considered noble cultural values, are in the form of concepts, fatwas, operational guidelines, advice, and mottos. These noble cultural values serve as the basis for the organization of educational institutions under the Tamansiswa Foundation and are maintained to this day. When Tamansiswa's teachings were used as the basis for developing the national curriculum in Indonesia, these teachings continued to resonate, becoming the foundation of education in Indonesia. Tamansiswa's educational teachings include the concept of the *Among* System, the concepts of *Tripusat Pendidikan* (the three centers of education) consisting of family, school, and community, *Tri-N*, namely *Niteni*, *Niroake*, and *Nambahi* (perceiving or observing, imitating, and developing), *Tri Sakti Jiwa*, namely *Cipta*, *Rasa*, and *Karsa* (three domains of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor), Leadership Trilogy, *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha*, *Ing Madya Mangun Karsa* and *Tut Wuri Handayani* (in the front position,

a leader should set an example or be a role model, in the middle position, he should convey the spirit, and in the back position, he should influence and support), and *Tringa*, namely *Ngerti*, *Ngrasa* and *Nglakoni* (knowing or understanding, feeling and doing).

According to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, spiritual and ethical education has priority over other aspects because it is the basis for the development of other potentials. Based on this opinion, character education imparted through social emotional learning is very important, and it will be very meaningful if it is imparted in conjunction with local cultural values. In practice, these local cultural values need to be explored by teachers according to their particular region or even country. As shown in this discussion, the teachings of Tamansiswa education and also some advice from Javanese culture can be integrated into SEL.

One way that is currently being explored by many teachers in implementing social-emotional learning is the CASEL 5 framework. CASEL stands for Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. In this framework, CASEL 5 includes five social-emotional competencies that students must acquire, namely (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness, (4) relationship skills, and (5) responsible decision making. The framework is shown in the figure below.



Figure. The Framework of Social-Emotional Learning from CASEL

In more detail, each of the five fundamental competencies that make up SEL can be elaborated below.

### **3.1. Self-awareness**

With this competency a person can understand their emotions, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, express what they need, be honest, and have a mindset to keep growing.

### **3.2. Self-management**

By having this competency, a person will be able to manage their emotions, set goals, plan and organize, take initiative, and motivate oneself.

### **3.3. Social Awareness**

This competency allows one to understand the perspective of others, recognize the strengths of others, show compassion, consider the feelings of others or empathy, and express gratitude.

### **3.4. Relationship Skills**

With this competency, someone will be able to communicate effectively, demonstrate leadership, build positive relationships, work in teams and collaborate, and offer and ask for help when needed.



### 3.5. Responsible Decision Making

This competency allows children to show curiosity, use critical thinking skills, be able to find solutions to their problems, consider possible risks before making a decision, and understand the consequences of one's behavior.

Other competencies that support the application of the five competencies are *empathy*, *mindfulness*, *compassion*, and *critical inquiry*, usually abbreviated as EMC2. *Empathy* is the ability to deeply understand learners in both personal and social situations and to care about learners' emotions, as evidenced by their behavior; *mindfulness* is the ability of individuals to be aware of their experiences so that they are willing to accept any situation without self-judgement ; *Compassion* is a form of action and emotion that leads an individual to care about and help others; and *critical inquiry* is the individual's ability to obtain information through observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, and self-assessment and then analyze it for understanding.

Based on the results of the studies on the impacts of the implementation of social-emotional competence, students with strong social-emotional competence will achieve better academic performance due to their active participation in class and ability to motivate themselves, enabling them to get good grades in tests. In addition, their participation and attendance in class will also increase because they will have confidence and good communication skills, so they will participate more actively and of course it will have a positive impact on their attendance in class. Another benefit for students with good social-emotional competencies is improved mental health and self-esteem. This is possible because these competencies will help students establish positive and supportive relationships with their peers. Therefore, if this social emotional learning is taught in a more meaningful way, one of which is by integrating it with local cultural values, these

competencies will be mastered by students and if applied properly will help realize school well-being.

#### 4. Discussions

In line with the educational teachings of Tamansiswa, in this Social-Emotional Learning, the most important thing is the balance of "*Cipta, Rasa, and Karsa*" (mind, feeling, and will). In this case, the "mind, feelings, and will" must be developed in a good balance. In the learning process, students will do it in three stages, namely "*Niteni, Niroake, Nambahi*" literally meaning "observing, imitating, developing". In this case, the students will first observe what is taught or exemplified by the teacher, then they will imitate the example given, and then do and develop it themselves.

Some examples of local cultural values, consisting of concepts from Tamansiswa educational teachings and Javanese expressions or wise words compiled from various sources, which are integrated into social-emotional learning are as follows.

##### 4.1 Self-awareness

*"Aja rumangsa bisa, nanging bisaa rumangsa."*

(Don't think you can, but think you can realize)

As humans, we should not feel that we can do everything, but we must recognize our abilities and weaknesses. It is related to the first social-emotional competence that students need to realize their strengths and weaknesses.

*"Ngilo marang ghito'e dewe."*

(To see one's own nape on the mirror)

This expression teaches students to evaluate themselves and look at their own condition. This competence is vital to students because it will enable them to identify their own emotions.

*"Jujur kuwi lawange pedamer"*

(honesty is the door of peace)

Related to the social-competence to build, it is advised that students be honest to themselves. When students have recognized and are aware of their emotions, they are expected to accept them or try to make peace with themselves.

#### **4.2 Self-management**

*"Neng – Ning – Nung – Nang"* (*meneng, wening, hanung, wenang*)

(silent-clear-strong-victorious)

The meanings of these four adjectives are interrelated. What students can learn from this expression is that when experiencing unpleasant conditions they must remain calm in order to think clearly. Thus, they will still have a strong will and eventually they will be able to master themselves. When they are calm and stable, they can continue their activities.

*"Ngerti, Ngrasa, Nglakoni"*

(understanding, feeling, doing)

In relation to social emotional learning, this three-word phrase teaches that when experiencing a problem, students should understand what is really going on, fully realize or keep their emotions under control, and keep doing what needs to be done.

*"Ana catur mungkur"*

(When there is a commotion, we should avoid)

In Javanese culture, *ana catur mungkur* is considered a very important value that everyone should have. It is believed that someone who has this character will be able to control his emotions and behavior. From this concept related to the Javanese philosophy of life, students should avoid doing things that harm themselves and others and strive for balance and harmony in all aspects of life.

#### 4.3 Social Awareness

*"Tepa selira"*

(tolerant or empathy)

This expression is the attitude of someone who feels what others feel. He expresses his sympathy to the person through his words, actions, and behavior. From this expression, students can learn to give sympathy when their friends are experiencing problems, sadness, or others in order to ease their burden.

*"Mong kinemong"*

(helping and taking care for each other's feeling)

This wise phrase teaches us to care about the feelings of others. It is important that in our words and actions do not hurt the feelings of others. From this advice students can learn to respect each other so that their relationships remain harmonious and they can learn pleasantly.

*"Ngono ya ngono ning aja ngono."*

(Do what you want to do but don't overdo it)

This advice teaches us to do things naturally and not overdo it. From this expression, students can learn not to do whatever they want without considering existing values or norms that harm others. They should keep others in mind when doing things.

#### **4.4 Relationship Skills**

*"Tri Kō" (Kooperatif, Konsultatif, dan Korektif)*

(Cooperative, Consultative, and Corrective)

The application of this concept in Tamansiswa's teachings is very important in maintaining relationships so that they are well maintained. For a good cause we must be able to cooperate with others, provide mutual input, and provide mutual correction or remind each other so that the relationship can be established in harmony. Teachers should emphasize this to students so that they are able to establish good relationships with their peers and in this condition they can learn happily.

*"Asah, Asih, Asuh"*

(Teaching, loving, and caring for each others)

This three-word phrase teaches us that in our relationships we need to learn from each other, love each other, and care for each other. This principle of association is very important to instill in students from an early age so that this social emotional competence will be well developed. Students will also realize that to achieve their learning goals they need each other and must maintain their good relationships.

*"Rukun agawe santosa, crah agawe bubrah"*

(Harmony makes peace, quarreling makes ruin)

What we learn from this expression is that we should try to maintain a good friendship. We should avoid all forms of disputes because they are pointless and will even damage the relationships that have been well established. For students, they should learn to get along well with their friends and solve problems well.

#### **4.5 Responsible Decision Making**

*"Aja mung syukur payu"*

(Don't just sell)

In our daily lives, we are often in a hurry or influenced by social pressure to act impulsively or carelessly. However, it is important to remember that acting without consideration and awareness can have unintended consequences. Based on this advice, teachers should teach students to act with consideration and awareness, especially when it comes to making a decision.

*"Sabar sareh mesthi bakal pikoleh"*

(If you are patient and calm, you will get what you want)

This expression teaches us that in doing something we should not be hasty but should be patient and calm. Similarly, in making important decisions, we should think it through, consider all positive and negative impacts, and decide what is best. Students should be taught this because they usually decide things without much consideration. They should know that decisions made in a hurry are usually not the right ones and can be accounted for.

## **5. Conclusion**

Character education, realized in the form of social-emotional learning, is very important and should be taught to students at all levels of education. This is becoming increasingly evident as classroom learning conditions change dramatically. Many students start to not focus on learning, but just play around, disrupt other students, and have low learning performance. Often there are problems among the students and sometimes even with the teacher. This, of course, does not make the learning conditions conducive. Therefore, social-emotional learning in school provides students with competencies that are expected to behave positively not only at school, but also at home and in the

community. Social-emotional competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Character education, or enculturation of students, is more meaningful when accompanied by an introduction to local cultural values. This serves two purposes, character education of students and preservation of existing cultural values. These cultural values are integrated into the social-emotional learning that provides the skills students need. Teachers can connect the social-emotional learning with the local cultural values in their teaching. It is believed that this will provide students with greater insight into their culture as they learn to understand and apply their social-emotional competencies.

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