

Cultural Literacy in Strengthening Students' Identity: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Culture is a way of life that is developed and shared by a group of people. Culture is formed from several unique elements including customs, language, works of art, religious and political systems. Identity is the noble values that are inherent and ingrained in a person, a people, a tribe and an ethnic group. Recently, many crimes and crimes have occurred, such as corruption, collusion, nepotism, robbery, murder, rape, sexual violence and various other deviant behavior. The main cause is because the nation's children have lost their identity with its noble and holy values. This article aims to explain the relationship between cultural literacy and student identity. The methodology used is a literature review to reveal the importance of cultural literacy in forming students' identity. The results of the literature review show that student identity is closely related to cultural literacy. Understanding and appreciation of culture greatly influences the formation of a person's identity. Someone who has high cultural literacy tends to have a good identity and act in accordance with the norms and noble values that apply in society. On the other hand, someone who has low cultural literacy tends to do things that are deviant and contrary to norms and noble values. Therefore, cultural literacy is very important in forming a person's identity so that they act according to the norms and noble values that apply in society. In the context of cultural literacy education, it can be done by integrating cultural literacy into the learning curriculum or through school extracurricular activities. It is recommended that further research be carried out on the application of cultural literacy in learning at school

Keywords: Cultural Literacy, Identity

Introduction

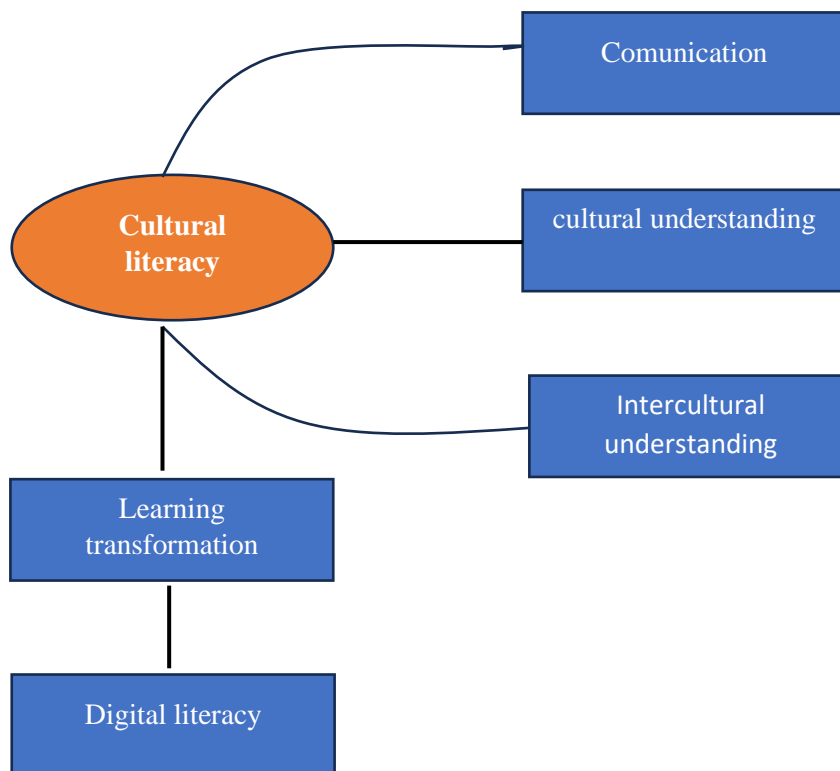
Recently, the Indonesian nation has experienced an extraordinary moral crisis. Crimes and crimes are not only committed by ordinary people, but also by officials who are highly educated. Look at cases of corruption, collusion and nepotism involving big and highly educated people. On the other hand, almost every day we hear about incidents of robbery, murder, sexual violence and various other deviant behavior.

Moral decline is something that everyone is very worried about. Reports in the mass media about promiscuous sexual behavior, student brawls over the use of narcotics and illegal drugs by the younger generation indicate that moral decadence has occurred among the younger generation. This moral decline is a problem that must be immediately prevented and addressed, so that the younger generation can be saved. Culture is something that cannot be separated from people's lives. Culture is considered a value that is needed to regulate daily behavior and actions. Everyone is encouraged to develop attitudes that are appropriate to their culture, so that these cultural values become a norm in society (Hamidy, 2015). Cultural literacy that requires values can be used as a learning tool for students at school. This is very useful in shaping the character of the younger generation, especially students, so that they can behave in accordance with the values and norms that apply around their lives.

Concepts and Models of Cultural Literacy

The term cultural literacy was popularized by Hirsch, Jr. in 1987 which he explained in his book entitled *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Hirsch, Jr.'s concept of cultural literacy is based on the industrial era, and consists of conservative, prescriptive indoctrination, which adheres to a national homogenous culture. Cultural literacy is a way of looking at social and cultural issues (Segal, 2015). Cultural literacy can also be interpreted as a person's ability to understand, appreciate and engage effectively in the various cultures that exist in society. This literacy includes knowledge of the customs, values, beliefs, language, arts, and ways of life of different social groups. With cultural literacy, a person can more easily adapt, communicate and work together in a multicultural environment.

To give birth to cultural literacy, learning is needed that requires changes in the way of thinking or mindset of students. This change in mindset often occurs through a social process where students understand that social and cultural relationships influence their beliefs and feelings. This is what is called transformational learning. To produce this change in mindset, other literacy is needed, namely digital literacy. Cultural literacy is manifested in the form of good communication, being able to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds in a respectful and effective way. understanding of culture and cross-cultural competence. Understand the differences and similarities between cultures, including the traditions, history, and worldviews of various ethnic groups or communities. This can be seen in the following diagram.



Identity

Tenas Efendy (2013), defines identity as noble values that are inherent and ingrained in a person, a people, a tribe and an ethnic group. Identity according to Mohd Yusof Othman et al (2012), are unique and special traits or characteristics from many aspects such as customs, language, culture and religion which are central in forming the identity and symbol of the personality of an individual or a nation. Related to the same opinion, Wan Muhamad (2010) interprets identity as the self-identity or personality that a person actually has, not just outwardly visible, but also including the values that they adhere to.

Some people argue that identity is a manifestation of a person's life ideology. Personality traits can emerge from childhood and can be influenced by several factors such as environmental and social factors. From the opinions above, it can be concluded that identity is a picture or identity or characteristic that differentiates a person from other people or between one group and another group. This identity is embedded in the person's daily life which makes the person's character or image.

Issues and Problems

Many findings related to cultural literacy cover various aspects related to an individual's ability to understand, appreciate, and participate in different cultures. The following describes several issues that often arise in the context of cultural literacy:

1. Lack of multicultural education. In many places, the education system still does not emphasize the importance of cultural literacy. As a result, many students do not have a deep understanding of regional cultures other than their own.
2. Gaps in access to information. Some community groups, especially those in remote areas or minority communities, may have limited access to resources that enable them

to develop cultural literacy. This includes lack of access to technology, books, and media from various cultures.

3. The danger of cultural homogenization. Globalization can accelerate cultural homogenization, where dominant cultures, such as Western culture, dominate and drown out local or minority cultures. This makes some groups lose their cultural identity and makes it increasingly difficult to preserve and promote cultural diversity.
4. Discrimination and intolerance. Lack of cultural literacy can strengthen discriminatory attitudes and intolerance towards cultural differences. For example, prejudice against certain ethnic or religious groups often arises from a lack of understanding of their beliefs and practices.
5. The complexity of cultural identity. In the modern world, many individuals have complex cultural identities, for example the result of a blend of native and home cultures. Cultural literacy is necessary to understand these dynamics and respect the plurality of individual identities.
6. The role of media in cultural literacy. The media has an important role in shaping public understanding of different cultures. Unfortunately, cultural representation in the media is often biased or limited to stereotypes. This hinders increasing people's cultural literacy.
7. Maintaining local culture. In the midst of globalization, local culture is often marginalized. Cultural literacy is important to maintain the continuity of local culture, either through education, policy, or strengthening the role of local communities in preserving their traditions.

Literature Review

The culture that prevails in society contains good values that can shape the character and identity of someone who practices them. Therefore, a person's identity is greatly influenced by understanding the culture that applies in their environment. Rezaee, Farahian, and Mansooji (2021), found that the group that used multimedia Internet-based extensive reading was superior to the other two groups in terms of receptive skills. They also have higher levels of reading motivation. Findings from the qualitative phase indicated that participants tended to prefer using multimedia materials rather than linear texts, or printed books.

Saini and Baba (2024), in their research concluded that students' use of multimedia applications is positively related to their perception of themselves as critical thinkers and their attitudes towards learning. Uncontrolled globalization has penetrated national culture, representing local culture in every region from Sabang to Merauke (Tobroni, 2012). This has an impact on cultural changes in society which have been believed and carried out for generations (Adib, 2011).

Wankel and Blessinger (2013), discuss the use of various multimodal, multimedia, and transmedia technologies to create technology-rich learning environments, increasing motivation, participation, and academic engagement. Increasingly affordable and evolving digital technologies, along with contemporary learning theories, have changed the way we teach and learn in the 21st century. Naluwoza et al (2023) The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) has a positive and significant impact on student

engagement and student learning outcomes. Student engagement is moderated in the relationship between ICT use and student learning outcomes.

Suggestions for Improving Cultural Iteration and Identity

Increasing cultural literacy and identity is an important step to strengthen individual and community identity and maintain cultural diversity. The following are several efforts that can be made to increase cultural literacy and identity:

1. Culture-based education. Including educational materials that discuss local values, customs, traditions and history in the school curriculum. This will make students more familiar with their culture from an early age. This can also be done in extracurricular activities in the form of arts, culture, traditions and history
2. Use of digital technology. Create and promote digital platforms (applications, websites, social media) that provide information about local culture, traditions and history. Make documentary films or books related to culture.
3. Community activities. Create various cultural-related activities in the school community such as art performances, exhibitions and others

Conclusion

Literasi Cultural literacy and identity have a close relationship, where understanding and appreciation of culture greatly influences the formation, maintenance and development of one's identity. Cultural literacy helps individuals understand the values, norms, traditions, and practices that shape their identity. When a person better understands their own culture, they are better able to understand who they are and where they come from. Personal and social identities are often closely linked to culture of origin, including language, beliefs, and customs.

On a world level, humans live in a multicultural society. Cultural literacy helps them understand the various cultures that influence their identity. By understanding diverse cultures, a person can develop a more complex and flexible identity, one that reflects the realities of their lives among different cultures. Someone who has high cultural literacy tends to be more proud of their cultural heritage and more confident in expressing their identity. So they can be proud of their own culture while respecting other people's cultures which may be different from theirs. Cultural literacy is not just a person's knowledge of one's own culture and the culture of others, but what is more important is that cultural literacy must give birth to a character or identity that is in accordance with applicable cultural values.

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