

Character Education Through Inspirational Activities in the Nusantara Module Course in the Independent Student Exchange Program

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Abstract

Inspiration is one of the sub-discussions in implementing the Indonesian archipelago module in the independent student exchange program. This activity presents an inspiring figure from the area, whether a cultural figure, politician, official, or someone considered capable of inspiring students. This research aims to see what character education students receive during this activity. The sample for this research was 23 students participating in the second class of the 2022 independent student exchange program from several regions in Indonesia. This research method is qualitative descriptive research with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and direct involvement in inspirational activities. In this inspirational activity, inviting a central figure who can provide insight, experiences, and tips so that this figure can be successful and become famous is very important as motivation and encouragement to the participants when they later achieve success in life. The character education obtained in this activity is the religious character, independence, tenacity, hard work, courage, discipline, never giving up, optimism, and cooperation.

Keywords: Character Education, Nusantara Module, Student Exchange.

Abstrak

Inspirasi merupakan salah satu sub bahasan dalam pelaksanaan modul nusantara Indonesia pada program pertukaran mahasiswa merdeka. Kegiatan ini menghadirkan sosok inspiratif dari daerah, baik tokoh budaya, politik, pejabat atau seseorang yang dianggap mampu menginspirasi mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat pendidikan karakter apa saja yang diterima mahasiswa selama kegiatan ini. Sampel penelitian ini adalah 23 mahasiswa peserta program pertukaran mahasiswa merdeka angkatan kedua tahun 2022 dari beberapa daerah di Indonesia. Metode penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara dan keterlibatan langsung dalam kegiatan inspiratif. Dalam kegiatan inspiratif ini, mendatangkan seorang tokoh sentral yang dianggap mampu memberikan wawasan, pengalaman, dan kiat-kiat agar tokoh tersebut dapat sukses dan menjadi tokoh terkenal sangat penting sebagai motivasi dan penyemangat kepada peserta ketika nantinya meraih kesuksesan dalam hidup. Pendidikan karakter yang diperoleh dalam kegiatan ini adalah karakter religius, mandiri, ulet, kerja keras, berani, disiplin, pantang menyerah, optimis dan kerja sama.

Kata Kunci: Modul Nusantara, Pendidikan Karakter, Pertukaran Mahasiswa.



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Introduction

The world is changing rapidly, and students, as the younger generation, must be prepared to face the challenges that lie ahead. It requires a comprehensive strategy that combines high-quality education, skills development, technological understanding, character education, and role models to enable them to face future challenges. A well-designed and relevant education system gives young people the values, information, and abilities they need to face future challenges. These challenges include the demand for mastery of 21st-century skills, problem-solving abilities, and creative learning. All of these must be an integral part of the education process.¹

In connection with this, character education is a significant element that should not be overlooked. Character education is an approach to education that aims to develop moral, ethical, and positive personality values in individuals. The main goal of character education is to form people with integrity, responsibility, empathy, and other positive attitudes. Integrity is a moral quality that includes honesty, exemplary, and consistency in carrying out moral values and principles. The importance of integrity encompasses some significant aspects, both at the individual level and in social and professional contexts. Integrity is the basis of trust. Individuals are necessary for personal success.²

Presidential Decree Number 87 of 2017 regarding strengthening character education states that to create a cultured nation through strengthening religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love of the homeland, appreciate achievement, are communicative, love peace, like to read, care about the environment, care about social issues, and are responsible, need to strengthen character education.³ Through this presidential decree, it is also emphasized that strengthening character education as intended in letter b is a joint responsibility of families, educational units, and society,⁴

¹ Deya Indriati, Iis Nurasiah, dan Irna Khaleda Nurmeta, “Modul Nusantara: Mengembangkan Karakter Mahasiswa Dalam Kelas Multikultural,” *MIMBAR PGSD Undiksha* 10, no. 1 (30 April 2022): 142–47, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jjpgsd.v10i1.46036>.

² Syamsul Kurniawan dkk., *Best Practice Character Building: Model, Inspirasi Dan Catatan Reflektif* (Yogyakarta: Samudra Biru, 2019).

³ Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents & Translation, “President Jokowi Signs Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 on Strengthening Character Education,” Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 6 September 2017, <https://setkab.go.id/en/president-jokowi-signs-presidential-regulation-no-87-of-2017-on-strengthening-character-education/>.

⁴ As’aril Muhajir, “Inclusion of Pluralism Character Education in the Islamic Modern Boarding Schools during the Pandemic Era,” *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 13, no. 2 (27 Juni 2022): 196–220; Ali Rachman dkk., “The Development and Validation of the ‘Kuesioner Tema Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila’ (KT P5): A New Tool for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile in

remembering that as a nation that upholds cultural values and religious teachings. It is appropriate for this character education to be joint attention following the duties and functions of each stakeholder in re-creating a nation that is friendly, cultured, polite and compassionate, challenging and never gives up.

Cultivating character through education has many benefits and interests both for individuals and society as a whole. Educating character to anyone helps shape individuals into quality citizens with moral integrity, responsibility, and concern for society. Character education can help prevent negative behavior such as violence, intimidation, and other detrimental behaviors by instilling positive values. Character values such as perseverance, courage, and discipline help individuals overcome life's challenges. Individuals with positive character values tend to have better social relationships and can work effectively with others.⁵

Indonesia's 2045 vision to become a developed country with the fifth largest GDP in the world needs to be supported by human resources who have the knowledge and abilities ready to compete at the international level.⁶ The nation's problems, as well as job opportunities in the future, will no longer rely on natural resources but instead on human ability to work. As science, knowledge, research, and community service institutions, universities must focus more on realizing their performance targets. One of the keys to managing higher education performance is through the Main Higher Education Performance Indicators.⁷

Through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology and the Directorate General of Higher Education in 2021, the government has launched the Independent Learning-Independent Campus program, or what is known as MBKM.⁸ It

Indonesian Pioneer Schools," *Helion* 10, no. 16 (30 Agustus 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e35912>.

⁵ Friska Patrecia Purba, Dila Safira Br Barus, dan Imelda Natalia Purba, "Pengaruh Kegiatan Kebhinekaan Modul Nusantara Program PMM Dalam Peningkatan Pengetahuan Budaya Mahasiswa," *Community Development Journal: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 4, no. 2 (19 Juni 2023): 2959–63, <https://doi.org/10.31004/cdj.v4i2.14869>.

⁶ Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents & Translation, "Indonesia Will Be World's 4th Largest Economy by 2045, President Jokowi Says," Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 27 Maret 2017, <https://setkab.go.id/en/indonesia-will-be-worlds-4th-largest-economy-by-2045-president-jokowi-says/>.

⁷ Hardi Mulyono dkk., "Effect of Service Quality Toward Student Satisfaction and Loyalty in Higher Education," *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business* 7, no. 10 (2020): 929–38, <https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2020.vol7.no10.929>.

⁸ Putri Ulfa Kamalia dan Eka Hendi Andriansyah, "Independent Learning-Independent Campus (MBKM) in Students' Perception," *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran* 7, no. 4 (11 Desember 2021): 857–67, <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v7i4.4031>.

is felt that this program provides a breath of fresh air and a new paradigm to tertiary institutions and students regarding the process and emphasizes off-campus learning activities that can be recognized. The Independent Campus policy is expected to provide a good climate for developing student interests and talents. Students can hone their skills in innovative, flexible learning situations based on student curiosity and interests and following societal problems.⁹

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemdikbduristik), 13.33% of new graduates from universities do not yet have jobs. What is clear is that the number of unemployed college graduates in 2022 is 1,120,128. It includes information on 884,759 academic college graduates and 235,559 vocational college graduates.¹⁰ According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, there is a discrepancy between the number of graduates and career opportunities. There are too many graduates compared to the number of open positions: every year, 1.5 million bachelor's and diploma holders graduate from Indonesia. Meanwhile, there are around 300,000 jobs available every year.¹¹

For this reason, the government, in several programs it has initiated, namely the independent learning-independent campus (MBKM), always encourages and facilitates learning facilities that are not only academically oriented but also aim to provide knowledge in the hope that it can provide motivation and open up students' knowledge about entrepreneurship when completed. One of the government's encouragements and motivations is implemented through the inspiration program contained in the archipelago module course. The Indonesian archipelago module is a course included in the independent student exchange program. This archipelago module program is a program designed to be part of the mandatory courses that must be taken by every prospective participant in the independent student exchange program and must be included in the student's KRS in addition to the other courses chosen when taking part in this program.¹²

⁹ Indriati, Nurasiah, dan Nurmeta, "Modul Nusantara."

¹⁰ Nikita Rosa, "Kemendikbudristek: 13,33% Lulusan Perguruan Tinggi Masih Pengangguran," detikedu, 27 Juli 2023, <https://www.detik.com/edu/perguruan-tinggi/d-6844724/kemendikbudristek-13-33-lulusan-perguruan-tinggi-masih-pengangguran>.

¹¹ Ilham Pratama Putra, "1,5 Juta Mahasiswa Lulus Tiap Tahun, Pertumbuhan Lapangan Pekerjaan Hanya 300 Ribu," medcom.id, Mei 2022, <https://www.medcom.id/pendidikan/news-pendidikan/PNg7np4N-1-5-juta-mahasiswa-lulus-tiap-tahun-pertumbuhan-lapangan-pekerjaan-hanya-300-ribu>.

¹² Siti Kholida, *Meniru Kebiasaan Orang-Orang Sukses Sebelum Usia 30 Tahun* (Yogyakarta: Lontar Mediatama, 2019).

One of the motivations given to students is a character education approach using stories or examples of models that have previously been carried out by people who were previously successful in their fields, whether someone who was successful in politics, businessman, artists or other fields that stood out at least within that area. This approach is very important because it brings directly people who are considered successful in their respective fields. With the presence of these successful figures, they can dialogue and discuss directly, especially the figures' experiences and what they have experienced and gone through, so they can be as successful as they are now. This is very important to motivate and provide knowledge for the next generation, in this case, the students who will be the future successors of the nation. Therefore, this research aims to explore the specific aspects of character education that students receive during the execution of this activity, focusing on how it influences their personal development and moral understanding.

Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. Sugiyono said that descriptive qualitative research is a research approach based on postpositivism and is usually used to investigate natural objective situations in which the researcher plays an important role or is the research instrument. Data was obtained through direct observation of inspiration activities and interviews with 23 students participating in inspiration who took the Indonesian archipelago module course at Al Washliyah Nusantara Muslim University.

Data obtained from observations, interviews, and direct observation are inventoried according to the research objectives that will be revealed. The data that has been tabulated is then interpreted to conclude. Next, the data analyzed and concluded is made into a report using a qualitative descriptive method according to the facts that occurred and were found in the research. Then, a conclusion is drawn based on the research findings.

Results and Discussion

Research related to character education through inspiration activities was carried out during the implementation of the Indonesian archipelago module course at Al Washliyah Muslim Nusantara University. It began at the end of the implementation of the independent student exchange program in November 2022. The implementation of

the Indonesian module inspiration activities was carried out offline. The activity location in the class consists of 23 students, one Indonesian module lecturer, one student as a mentor, and one activity coordinator.

This research is different from previous studies, including Episman Gea, Sarina Arta Lena Sihombing and Hani Jesika Purba entitled Gea, E., Sihombing, S. A. L., & Purba, H. J. (2023) entitled: Effectiveness of Student Character Development Through Diversity Activities in the Nusantara Module in the Merdeka.¹³ And then research by Acep Rahmat Henny Suharyati and Fiqra Muhamad Nazib (2024) entitled Diversity Values Through The Independent Student Exchange Program In Higher Education.¹⁴ Also, research by Ulhaq, H. D. D., Adawiyah, I. R., Kinanti, S. N., & Nur, F. (2024). Implementation of Strengthening Character Education Through the Independent Student Exchange Program Implementation of Strengthening Character Education Through the Independent Student Exchange Program.¹⁵

This research approach is important because it directly brings successful people to their respective fields. With the presence of these successful figures, they can dialogue and discuss directly, especially the figures' experiences and what they have experienced and gone through, so they can be as successful as they are now.

The participating students who took part in this activity came from 11 universities in several regions of Indonesia, such as Gorontalo University, Semarang State University, Tidar University, Kediri University, Garut University, PGRI Wates University, Majalengka University, Indonesian Education University, Prof. University Dr Hamka, Muhammadiyah University Jakarta, Juanda University Bogor. Apart from taking the archipelago module courses, all participants also took other courses that had been previously selected.

The Nusantara Module is a series of activities focused on creating a comprehensive understanding of diversity, inspiration, reflection, and social

¹³ Episman Gea, Sarina Arta Lena Sihombing, dan Hani Jesika Purba, "Efektivitas Pengembangan Karakter Mahasiswa Melalui Kegiatan Kebinekaan Dalam Modul Nusantara Di Program Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka 2," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 3, no. 2 (20 Mei 2023): 3569–77.

¹⁴ Acep Rahmat, Henny Suharyati, dan Fiqra Muhamad Nazib, "Nilai-Nilai Kebhinekaan Melalui Program Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka Di Perguruan Tinggi," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Citra Bakti* 11, no. 2 (5 Mei 2024): 588–600, <https://doi.org/10.38048/jipcb.v11i2.3426>.

¹⁵ Hafizh Daffa Dhiya Ulhaq dkk., "Implementasi Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Program Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan* 10, no. 9 (12 Mei 2024): 223–29, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11177402>.

contribution, and it is designed through sequential and repeated guidance.¹⁶ Through this activity, students are invited to experience and see firsthand what and how reality occurs in each of these activities, including activities related to inspiration, which contain activities that present characters, dialogue, and discussion intending to provide motivation and understanding.

Inspiration is an impulse or stimulus that encourages someone to create new ideas, actions, or works. It can come from various sources, such as personal experiences, observations, works of art, nature, and interactions with other people. Inspiration can come suddenly or develop from deep thought and reflection. Life experiences, challenges, or significant events in a person's life can be a powerful source of inspiration. Interacting with people with unique experiences, ideas, or views can spark inspiration and motivate a person to see things from a different perspective.¹⁷

The word inspirational can also be interpreted as something that can have an influence in the form of enthusiasm to do or do something that creates positive things or can create something that can attract someone to do a job. The word inspiration is also a process that encourages the mind to take action and make something creative or different from others. Where an educator must possess this inspiration, an educator must be able to create new ideas or ideas to motivate students to do something that can make them achieve learning goals.¹⁸

Learning and gaining new knowledge can often inspire students to create or do something different, which aims to stimulate inspiration, as obtained from conversations and discussions with regional inspirational figures.¹⁹ This inspirational activity invited three figures, both internal to Al-Washliyah Muslim Nusantara University and external parties who were deemed able to provide motivation and inspiration for students, thus providing additional insight into how successful people have characters that can lead them to the pinnacle of fame in their respective fields.

¹⁶ Admin Web, “Apakah itu Modul Nusantara?,” Kampus Merdeka, 2024, <https://pusatinformasi.kampusmerdeka.kemdikbud.go.id/hc/id/articles/9400340477593-Apakah-itu-Modul-Nusantara>; Kemdikbudristek RI, *Panduan Pelaksanaan Program Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* (Jakarta: Program Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM) Direktorat Pembelajaran dan Kemahasiswaan Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, Riset, dan Teknologi Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia, 2024), https://pusatinformasi.kampusmerdeka.kemdikbud.go.id/hc/en-us/article_attachments/32778306090009.

¹⁷ Dede Prandana Putra dan Reko Saprianto, *Young Inspiration: 6 Langkah Sukses ala Reko Saprianto* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2020).

¹⁸ Firmansah Kobandaha, “Pendidikan Inspiratif (Menjadikan Iklim Pembelajaran Bermakna),” *Tadbir: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 2 (1 Agustus 2017): 118–23.

¹⁹ Muh Husyain Rifa'i dkk., *Model Pembelajaran Kreatif, Inspiratif, dan Motivatif* (Cirebon: Yayasan Wiyata Bestari Samasta, 2022).

Table 1: Inspirational figures

Characters Present	Field
Dedi Iskandar Batubara	PW Al Washliyah/ DPD RI
Syafwan Hadi Umry	North Sumatran writer
Rahmadi Ali	Academic/Dean

Table 1 shows three inspiring figures: Dedi Iskandar Batubara as PW Al Washliyah/DPD RI, Syafwan Hadi Umry as North Sumatran writer, and Rahmadi Ali as academic/dean. Inspiration is a message from an activity, event, or situation that touches emotions and contains disclosure and awareness, moving people who receive it to follow it up in concrete actions. This inspiration will at least provide encouragement and motivation for students who later work in the real world after finishing their studies. This program aims to create individuals who are not only academically competent but also have integrity, empathy, and good leadership abilities. This program can help in strengthening students' leadership character. By involving them in inspiring activities, they can develop the leadership skills needed to bring about positive change. Meanwhile, various inspirational activities are listed in Table 2

Table 2: Inspirational activities

Inspiration	Objective
Students took part in talk shows from regional inspirational figures. Example: Humanist, outstanding athletes, regional heads, entrepreneurs, successful figures, and others	Instill the character of being honest, tenacious, never giving up, not afraid to fail, independent, innovative hard work, responsibility, cooperation, discipline

Character refers to the collection of traits, values, attitudes, and behaviors that make up a person's personality. This includes aspects of morals, ethics, and individual integrity. Character reflects how a person interacts with others, acts in certain situations, and faces life's challenges. Character is not something static but can develop and change over time. Character education aims to help individuals develop positive character to become reasonable and responsible members of society.

A character that can make someone able to work hard and not easily give up on the results they have achieved. These actions are patterned every day and ultimately result in success. Educators should realize that teaching is a job that is not simple and easy. On the other hand, teaching is very complex because it simultaneously involves pedagogical, psychological, and didactic aspects. The pedagogical element refers to the fact that teaching at school takes place in an educational environment.

Character education is a system of labeling values that combines elements of awareness or will, knowledge, and action to practice these values towards God Almighty, other people, the environment, and one's own country. One way to contribute to the formation of national character is through personal character development. However, the formation of a person's unique character can only occur in the relevant social and cultural context because humans exist in a certain social and cultural environment. In other words, character and cultural development can occur within the school framework without removing students from the social environment, local culture, or country culture. Cultural and character education aims to uphold *Pancasila*, the nation's social and cultural environment.

In this inspiration activity, these three figures were chosen as resource persons. The inspiration activity was carried out according to the schedule determined by the Nusantara module lecturer responsible for implementing this program. In each of these activities, the figures as resource persons were given time to appear in front of the inspirational participants to tell or share their experiences, obstacles or hurdles encountered on the way to achieving success, tricks for taking action, etc.

Inspiration makes learning more meaningful. Students understand facts and concepts and see their relevance and significance in their daily lives and future. Inspirational education is not only about material or professional achievements but also about building character and positive values. Inspiration can come from figures who show integrity, leadership, and courage. Inspiration can stimulate independence and self-confidence. Inspired students are confident in their abilities and are better prepared to overcome obstacles.

The aim of the activity will be the primary objective of the successful character inspiration activity. The main concern is that this activity provides motivation, encouragement, and inspiration to students regarding the experiences gained by the characters, whether good or bad, sweet or bitter, or failure or success, which makes these figures prosperous in the present. In the history of successful figures, no one has gone through obstacles in managing or advancing his career. In this context, the characters will tell and share tips on dealing with situations and conditions that occur as obstacles.

Inspirational figures often share their life experiences, struggles, and lessons learned. These stories aim to provide motivation, outlook on life, and learning to others. Some of the similarities in character between the three inspirational figures include: 1).

Struggle and Perseverance. Many inspirational figures share stories about their struggles in overcoming obstacles and challenges. They emphasize how important perseverance and passion are to achieving goals. 2). Failure as Learning. Many inspirational figures highlight failure as a natural part of the journey to success. They discuss how failure can be a valuable lesson and an incentive to keep trying. 3). Determination and Confidence. Inspirational figures often talk about the determination and belief needed to achieve goals. They emphasize the importance of believing in yourself and staying focused on the vision. 4). Independence and Creativity. Inspirational figures may also emphasize the importance of independence and creativity. They may share how innovative ideas or unique approaches helped them achieve success. 5). Optimism and Mental Resilience. Stories of inspirational figures often reflect optimism and mental resilience. They can talk about maintaining a positive attitude even in difficult situations. 6). Overcoming Fear and Lack of Confidence. Several inspirational figures talk about how they overcame fears and insecurities. They may provide tips on how to overcome these psychological barriers.

Conclusion

Character education through inspirational activities in the Nusantara Module course in the Independent Student Exchange Program is an approach that enriches students' learning and personal development by combining academic aspects with character values. Inspirational activities allow students to gain motivation and a deeper understanding of their potential, encouraging them to take an active role in self-development and contribution to society.

The Nusantara Module course provides a contextual learning experience by integrating local values and local wisdom so that students can feel the relevance of learning to the reality of everyday life. Character education integrated into the Independent Student Exchange Program can improve the quality of independent students who not only focus on improving academic competence but also on developing a strong personality, such as honesty, tenacity, never giving up, not being afraid of failure, independence, innovation, hard work, responsibility, cooperation, discipline.

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