

# The Influence of Javanese Culture on the Education Curriculum in Indonesia

Sahid Teguh Widodo

Javanology Institute, Sebelas Maret University  
Jl. Ir. Sutami 36 A, Surakarta, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia.  
E-mail: [sahidteguh Widodo@yahoo.com](mailto:sahidteguh Widodo@yahoo.com)

## Abstract

Javanese culture has a strong influence on the entire education curriculum in Indonesia, especially on the implementation of the four main strengths of Javanese culture, namely *mythos*, *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. These four pillars form the spirit of Javanese culture as self-cultivation for every human being in Indonesia. This paper aims to describe several main ideas surrounding the influence of Javanese culture on the education system and curriculum in Indonesia, in particular the aforesaid four pillars of Javanese culture. In addition, it will also explain the role of culture as an initiator, dynamist, and inspiration for the development of education in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** pillar, culture, Java, curriculum, Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

One of the issues that has recently appeared in the field of Javanese culture is the emergence of a new area of bipolar-contradictive discourse (Sahid, 2011) Javanese culture can be viewed from two different perspectives: firstly, the assumption that Javanese culture is a noble or valuable culture; and secondly, the belief that Javanese culture is a culture from the past which is powerless and does not have the ability to keep up with the developments in each new era. Javanese culture has been replaced by the power of popular culture which is increasingly grasping the attention of the public despite the fact that it is cynically regarded as a culture that is lacking in aesthetics and values, and has a short fuse (Cohen, 1971), an opinion which cannot be ignored.

More than one third of the Indonesian population is made up of ethnic Javanese. More than eighty million people speak the Javanese language. This means that the Javanese culture has a very broad field of influence, both in Indonesia and abroad. The Javanese cultural area encompasses the lands of Madagascar, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaya, Myanmar (Burma), New Caledonia, Aruba, Curacao, and even reaches as far as The Netherlands. It is not surprising then that the Javanese culture plays an important role and holds a strategic position in the framework of cultural developments, giving meaning which increases the degree of humanity and improves efforts to build unity. Javanese culture covers a very broad field of study, including various aspects of life, such as social life, language, literature, law, politics, defence, economy, agriculture, astrology, currency, calendar, maritime, the living environment, and various forms of art and tradition.

The aim of this paper is to describe the ways in which the Javanese culture is implemented into the cultural based education curriculum. In the context of Indonesia as a country with such a great wealth of different cultures, this description is extremely important as part of a plan to create education which is both efficient and well-targeted. That is, education which is able to capture and express the basic strengths behind the stalwart civilization in order to educate the multicultural Indonesian nation.

## 2. Methodology

The form of research used is a qualitative descriptive study. Data was obtained from bibliographical sources. Therefore, the type of study is library research. The data that was obtained from various bibliographical sources was arranged and analyzed carefully. Data was collected using a method of content analysis, or a technique in which data is gathered based on the contents of documents. In order to ensure the validity of data, a tool was used which is known as triangulation of data, that is a system for testing data based on other data sources, other data, and other research results.

The technique for analysis used was a technique of interactive analysis. The writer worked amongst other research elements, namely data reduction, data display, and verification. The results of the analysis were presented in the form of words and did not use a statistical model. It was believed that this form and technique would reveal the goals of the research, namely to discover with certainty the influence of Javanese culture on the education system and curriculum in Indonesia (A Case Study in the City of Surakarta).

## 3. Pillars of Javanese Culture

Javanese culture continues to experience a rise and fall in greatness from one era to another (Sunarto, 1993). The greatness or importance of the Javanese culture needs to be supported by several strong pillars. The Javanese culture is in fact supported by four pillars which have enabled it to stand firm and survive until the present day.

These four pillars are given the names *Mythos*, *Logos*, *Ethos*, and *Pathos* (Oesman, 2004). The requirements needed in order to become a pillar, amongst others, are: strong, firm, in the right place, compatible, aligned, even, the same size, and meeting the necessary aesthetical requirements (Haugen, 1972; Eagleton, 2000). The Four Pillars of Culture is a dimension that is made up of a long history that has been selected, tested, and passed down from our ancestors.

#### 4. Mythos

*Mythos* is often understood to mean a fairytale, superstition, magic, or an ancient story that is not true. In this context, *mythos*, or myth, is a spirit of togetherness that is founded on ambition, hope, and noble values that are thought, understood, preserved, and fought for together, so that every person is willing to make sacrifices and to suffer in order to create a better life for the nation, increased prosperity, and a life that is of a higher quality, with a guarantee of peace and tranquility.

#### 5. Logos

In this context, *Logos* means ‘intellect’ or intelligence which continues to be progressive in order to create the mythos that is already present. The problem lies in how to explain *mythos* through the power of reason by classifying, categorizing, and formulating the operationalization of *mythos* within an objective (overt) reality and a subjective (covert) reality.

#### 6. Ethos

The third pillar is *Ethos*. This is a specific life view of something that is formed from *mythos* so that it possesses a value, character, and nature that is upheld by and belongs to a community. In the context of culture, *ethos* is the ability to manage, so that every person has his or her own duty and role, according to his or her own individual abilities and skills.

#### 7. Pathos

The fourth pillar is *Pathos*. *Pathos* is a huge force that is hidden because of the sense of past suffering. Everyone has a difference level of sensitivity to the experience of his or her own suffering. In reality, many people have a past life in which they have suffered but have not managed to become stronger as a result. The suffering of *trivikrama* can become a powerful force if a person is aware of the three strengths inside himself, namely *mythos*, *ethos*, and *logos*. These three strengths must be managed in such a way that they produce and awareness and understanding of the meaning of suffering. *Pathos* is an awareness which gives a person space to learn from a hardship – to learn that fate can only be changed by strengthening the unity and cooperation of all elements of a nation.

#### 8. Implementation in Education

There is not a single person in Indonesia who is stupid. This is the magic talisman that should be owned by our education system. The four pillars of culture mentioned above are complementary, linked together, and interconnected. This means that the cultural based education which is to be developed needs to involve all four of these cultural pillars.

#### 9. Implementation of Mythos

*Mythos* is usually inserted in the form of fairytales or folklore, for example in concepts such as the Queen of Justice, moral behavior, virtue and sublimation, inner and outer happiness (Prudentia, 2010), and the concept of *guyup* (mutual assistance or cooperation). *Mythos* is a vitality that has been extracted from values of sublimity and togetherness throughout living history and the history of human life. In modern society, *mythos* appears as a symptom of a life-style which leads people towards the world of materialism, figures, fantasy, trend, glamour, consumerism, and hedonism, all of which push people further and further away from their cosmic position. All of these factors have an effect on the ever decreasing importance of religious foundations, values, and life convictions. The disappearance of *mythos* also leads to a decrease in the vitality of the community. In the darkness or absence of values, orientation, position, and footholds, the increasingly restless Javanese community prefers to choose whatever appears easier, momentary, or instantaneous.

The education curriculum in Indonesia should be able to make use of the great wealth of local oral traditions that belong to this nation. The noble values, wisdom, thoughts, temperament, character, ideas, spirit, concepts of prosperity, safety, and inner and outer happiness (Karkono, 1986) that are contained in Indonesian folklore must continue to be uncovered and cultivated through education. The legacy of manuscripts, rare documents, and historical objects such as temples, epigraphs, and other historical places need to become the basic materials that can be used to develop a love for our land and our nation. There are numerous sources of Javanese knowledge

contained in manuscripts such as *Wulang Reh* (Paku Buwana IV), *Sasana Sunu* (Yasadipura II), *Wedhatama* (Mangkunegara IV), *Surya Ngalam* (Yasadipura I), etc. If the values contained in these ancient books continue to exist, live, and thrive in the Javanese people, surely the aspiration of creating a structured situation which is peaceful and tranquil, free from all doubt and anxiety, and spared of all anger that pulls people apart, will be realized.

### 10. Implementation of Logos

The Javanese culture possesses an extraordinary 'logos', for example in the diversity of food, clothing, customs, architecture and interior design of houses, agriculture, technology, medication, law, education, and so on. It is a fact that the Javanese people have succeeded in creating a variety of different drinks that are one hundred percent pure and healthy, an agricultural system that is environmentally friendly, ways for managing water and forest regions, a system of *guyup* or mutual cooperation, and other innovations in various other fields which have been proven in terms of their excellence and quality. The intellectual mentality of the Javanese should continue to progress and be aimed towards building a happier and more prosperous nation.

The national curriculum in the Indonesian education system should be able to express more deeply the intellectual wealth of its own nation. Modern science is not at odds with traditional knowledge. Why? Because traditional knowledge can become the fuel for discovering new formats in modern education. We are well aware that until now, there is still a dichotomy of space and goals between the traditional and the modern. The goal of modern science is to achieve the logical truth (rationale), while Javanese knowledge is more oriented towards discovering the ethical truth (Sunarko, 2004). A rationale which is ethical, has smart ethics and also a conscience, is a great asset for chasing our shortcomings in modern complexes such as is currently taking place. Ultimately, it appears that Javanese intellect does not stop simply with the human factor (anthropocentric) but rather also includes the social sphere and the surrounding universe (cosmocentric).

### 11. Implementation of Ethos

Ethos is a specific life view about something that is formed from mythos so that it possesses a value, character, and nature that is upheld by and belongs to a community. In the context of culture, *ethos* is the ability to manage, so that every person has his or her own duty and role, according to his or her own individual abilities and skills.

The ethos of Javanese culture is clearly described in the *5 Wasiat Dalem* written by K.G.P.A.A. Mangkunegara III, King of the Mangkunegaran Palace, which are still relevant for use at this present time.

<i>Mantep</i>	:	Loyal and firm in service, having no doubts when working because of a foundation of honesty and truth.
<i>Temen</i>	:	Earnest, honest, and good. Not easily tempted by promises, able to resist temptation.
<i>Gelem, nglakoni</i>	:	Not allowed to refuse any challenge, willing to suffer (Javanese: <i>prihatin</i> ), and living life with ease and sincerity.
<i>Aja gumunan</i>	:	Not easily surprised, amazed, or complacent. All of these weaken vigilance and lower dignity.
<i>Aja kagetan</i>	:	Not easily startled or persuaded to change an opinion about something that happens because the ability to remain calm brings with it great strength.

(Source: Sahid, 2011)

### 12. Implementation of Pathos

The Javanese community has a variety of different physical and spiritual experiences which take various forms, such as influences, pressures, shifts, and changes (slow or fast and radical). However, it is interesting that all of these are accepted or accommodated graciously (Karkono, 2004) with a typical Javanese attitude: organistic, holistic, integralistic, and ecological (Soenarto Timur, 1993). This is Javanese pathos, which does not discover itself and develop its unique characteristics in isolation but on the contrary within the digestion of a cultural intake from various external directions (Susena, 1984).

The education curriculum should take due consideration of the pathos of the nation as the basis for educational development. Rediscovering in detail and depth the values of cultural mythos, logos, and ethos is the real way in which to build a new pathos. A bitter and oppressive experience would in this way be gradually replaced with a positive atmosphere – an atmosphere that would give freedom and pride to all who own it.

### 13. Closing

The exploitation and glorification of Javanese culture in the context of national education is not a bad thing. Javanese culture is one of the numerous 'legs' of Indonesian culture. In my opinion, the Javanese culture does

not belong just to one country but to the whole of civilization or the whole world. For this reason, in the not too distant future, a cultural renaissance must take place.

Culture is the embodiment of human character (Soenarto, 1992). That is, man as an individual, a member of the community, a citizen, and a part of the universe and all that it contains. As a *khalifatullah* or Caliph of Allah, man was created in the world with no other mission than to ‘make the world more beautiful’, or *memayu hayuning bawana*, which can be defined as ‘making people more beautiful (*memayu hayuning sarira*), ‘making the nation more beautiful’ (*memayu hayuning bangsa*), and ‘making the world more beautiful’ (*memayu hayuning bawana*) (Ki Hadjar Dewantara in Soenarto, 1993).

There is no such word as “instant” in culture. The implementation of the four pillars of Javanese culture in the education system and curriculum in Indonesia must be willing to pass through a number of existing stages, namely: *teping* or ‘knowing and accepting’, *dunung* or ‘understanding’, *trang trawaca*, *srawung* ‘participating, taking part’, and *manggung* or ‘performing up front, reaching worldwide’.

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