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## The Significance of Environmental Contents in Character Education for Quality of Life

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### Abstract

The environmental awareness is expected to be a part of the characters of young people. This study aims to explore college students' opinions regarding the environmental contents in the subjects to contribute in improving the comfortable living in Jakarta. This study used qualitative methods of interviewing technique to 33 students from different majors. The results of these study show that 91% students agreed to the holding of courses that include environmental contents, while the rest 1% not agreed. For the relationship aspect of improving the comfortable living, 76% students agreed, while the remaining 21% students not agreed.

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*Keywords* : Environmental content; character education; comfortable living; quality of life

### 1. Introduction

Environmental issues have been a trending topic nowadays. This is even more as many recently occurring disasters in Indonesia are getting higher, as the country is located in the Ring of Fire area. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are the two examples of potentially occurring disasters for a country located in the area. Besides the natural hazard typical of a country located in a circum-Pacific belt, there are also human-instigated disasters, like forest fires, floods, and landslides. The last two examples are due

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to the absence of trees in stabilizing the slopes, one of which is to maintain the amount of water infiltrating the soil, and thus, to prevent the slopes from sliding down to the lower-level land.

Considering the fact that many natural disasters occurred due to environmental damaging behaviors, it is imperative for the society, or at least the intellectual group, to have a good understanding of the significance of environmental preservation. Because of this, our university had included some environmental contents into our general subjects, the character building (commonly called CB in short) subjects serials. The inclusion of the contents is intended to improve the students' environmental awareness, considering that environmental issues are rarely put into the lecture materials, but it is very important for socialization and internalization in the character building. For our latest revision of CB subjects, the environmental education here has dual purposes. First is to increase the students' environmental awareness for preventing environmental damaging behaviors and natural disasters. Second is to develop their understanding that environmental preservation and improvement of environmental quality will lead to the comfortable living, which eventually improves the quality of life in the society as well. The environmental education here consists of increasing the environmental awareness in an individual's everyday life, and as a group, in business and professional practices.

Since the subjects are aimed to improve the students' personalities, the CB subjects get revision periodically. The periodic revision aimed to fulfill the requirements suitable to any circumstances at those points. In enhancing the curriculum revision process of the current CB subjects, the authors tried to find out how far students agree with some environmental education contents in the subjects. Getting the assents from the students regarding of environmental contents of the CB subjects is quite a matter for authors. Since the authors' experiences in facing apathy toward environmental issues in the society, the authors do not want the students to be apathy themselves.

One of our major problems is that environmental issues have not been a concern in the education the education of Indonesia, whereas there are lots of environmental damages. Therefore the objective of our research is to get opinions from our students about the significance of environmental contents in the CB subjects, to increase the environmental awareness as part of our characters, and the significance of the environmental awareness to increase the comfortable living for our quality of life.

Relevant research relating to environmental education performed by Safa ÖZGÜRLER and Arzu CANSARAN, Amasya University, Turkey, which was published in the International Electronic Journal of Environmental Education Vol.4, Issue 2, 2014, 71-83. The aim of their study is to explore the level of environmental literacy of the graduate students in Amasya University; their approach to environment and environmental issues; and to investigate their beliefs about the sustainable development. The sample of the study is 5 graduate students studying at Amasya University, 3 female and 2 male, in 2012-2013 academic year. The data collected was analyzed by using content analysis. According to the findings, environmental knowledge of graduate students is not at a high level but their approach to environment and environmental issues, interest of environmental education is at a high level. In addition, they have positive awareness about sustainable development. Graduate students are the teachers or the academics of the future. Therefore, these students' environmental knowledge and attitudes towards environment, sensitivity and interest have a great importance with regard to the solution of environmental problems. With this in mind, further studies like this might be conducted. This study is significant to prepare a background for the studies in this field and to make contribution to the literature.

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