

## The Practice of Alternative Education in Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia: Efforts to Educate Human Beings to Be Humanize



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**ABSTRACT:** Education that is currently developing is threatened with losing its main spirit. Education implemented in the form of tiered formal schools, in its development, has denied the humanitarian goals of education. Formal schools have become institutions like banks where students are bank customers who must comply with applicable regulations and systems. In banking style education, humans are molded into *homo-academicus* who lose their humanity. Recognizing such a situation, several institutions in Purwokerto offer alternative education which aims to give students the opportunity to develop their personal potential and creativity to become superior human beings and able to become citizens in their community. This research is aimed at revealing a more humane education as practiced by alternative education institutions in Purwokerto.

This research was carried out using qualitative research methods. Data and information were collected through in-depth interviews with several volunteers, teachers, facilitators and managers at alternative education institutions in Purwokerto. The results of this research show that there are several ways that alternative educational institutions can prevent the occurrence and development of bank-style education. First, education can be achieved by playing. Through games, students can not only learn happily, but also learn to work together with others and respect others. Second, education can be achieved through open dialogue between volunteers/teachers/facilitators and students. In addition, volunteers/teachers/ facilitators encourage students to help each other and love each other. In this way, learning materials are no longer academic problems but rather common problems that must be addressed as a group. Third, the school environment and the natural environment outside the school are places for students to learn. In this way, students learn to explore nature directly on the material they study. Students also have the opportunity to interact directly with community members who deal with nature in their daily lives. This opportunity can foster students' awareness of local community values and norms.

**KEYWORDS:** formal school, bank style education, alternative school, awareness, dialogue

### I. INTRODUCTION

Several studies (Normadewi, 2012; Thubany, 2013; Pinem, 2016) show that the level of education has a significant influence on the daily lives of community members. This view is understandable. Through the education, people have more freedom to look for work that is equivalent to their education. In addition, an educated person has sufficient motivation and courage to become an entrepreneur. However, the urgency of education in society's view is not without problems.

*Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia (PPRI/Republic of Indonesia Government Regulation) Number 47 of 2008* concerning Compulsory Education has actually appointed the central government and regional governments responsible for implementing compulsory education. In this way, the central and regional governments become guarantors so that community members are willing to send their children to school. Compulsory education, which is control by the government, provides prospective students with the opportunity to study from elementary (SD/MI) to secondary (SMP/MTs) educations. However, a study conducted by Fatah, et al. (2021) shows that data on Indonesian people's educational participation has actually decreased. For some members of society, it seems that education is a component of life that is not cheap.

Poverty is not destiny or a fate that seems unchangeable. Poverty can come from an individual mental attitude that is unprepared and unable to face life's challenges (Rejekiningsih, 2011). However, such factors do not mean they are deterministic and cannot be changed. Poverty can arise from situations around an individual such as the number of family dependents, a wide gap between income and expenses, type of work, low government attention and assistance, and low business capital (Kakisina, 2011). Poverty is often related to geographical factors (Nurwati, 2008). It was this geographical situation that in 2013 a 13 (thirteen) year old child named Tasripin did not go to school because he had to care for and support his 3 younger siblings (Wulan, 2020). His mother died

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and his father worked outside Java with his older brother. Tasripin lives in Gununglurah, a village on the slopes of Mount Slamet, Banyumas Regency and far from access to schools or urban life.

It must be admitted that low community participation in education cannot be separated from its economic situation. A study conducted by Berlian (2011) shows that the low participation of poor people in the compulsory education program is related to several things, such as population poverty, regional government fiscal capacity, geographical factors (long distance to school), and the availability of educational services - the ratio of numbers children in SD/MI or SMP/MTs classrooms.

The number of students who dropping out of school is one of the problems in Banyumas Regency. As many as 583 children in Banyumas Regency in 2018 did not continue their education to a higher level (Radar Banyumas, 19 July 2018). They did not continue to middle school or high school. This data is the result of data collection carried out by the Banyumas Regency Education Service (*Dinas Pendidikan*) through schools and each sub-district education unit (*Unit Pendidikan Kecamatan*). According to Radar, the Head of the Banyumas Regency Educational Planning Subdivision at that time, Ari Kusyono, the reasons why students did not continue their studies to secondary school level varied, ranging from parents who did not allow their children to continue school, their own children being lazy, transportation problems, and including the presence of children with special needs (*Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus*). In such a situation, certain efforts are needed to encourage community members to care about education. At this point alternative education is needed.

Alternative education is an educational program or way of learning that is different from education in conventional schools (Pradewi, 2015). Such education seeks to open access to education as widely as possible for members of the community. This kind of education is an alternative because it seems to go against the mainstream of formal education. These alternative schools or education are often seen as a response to the failure of conventional education in humanizing students (Muzakkar, 2010). Musa Ahmad's writing (in Baharudin, 2007) about the *Qariyah Thayyibah* (QT) community school in Kalibening Village, Tingkir District, Salatiga City, shows that QT is a quality and cheap educational institution and gives residents of the surrounding community the opportunity to participate. According to Musa Ahmad, community-based education is a form of creativity and adaptation of community members to educational problems. At the QT community school, study participants come to learn together about whatever they want (Pradewi, 2015). In Pradewi's research, it was also stated that the QT community school already had a liberating educational spirit.

The teaching and learning process in formal education in general has often been carried out within the framework of teacher-student relationships, as the relation between subject and object. The subject matter is formulated in such a way as to enable students to master certain sciences. At the end of education, students will be recognized as having surpassed a certain level of education through the provision of a diploma or formal recognition through certain value standards so that they can continue their education to the next level. Such a process requires a lot of money to pay teachers and maintain buildings and other educational facilities. Other issues surrounding such schools also persist, such as expensive school fees, problems with books, curriculum, exams, and the problem of violence in schools (Martono, 2018).

Alternative education tries to offer a simple educational process. In such a school, educators and students are simultaneously subjects and objects. The learning process and the subject matters must be able to foster the participants to create and re-create knowledge and not memorize it. This is the liberating character of education which was initiated by Paolo Freire (Datunsolang, 2018). Liberating education is also seen as being able to place humans in a central position in every change that occurs and is also able to direct humans to participate in managing these changes (Siswanto, 2007). Alternative education not only promises students to become educated community figures but also open-minded and better able to appreciate the life of society and the surrounding environment.

For this reason, the article resulting from this research aims to identify, describe and explain the interpretation of the concept of liberation education through local wisdom carried out by alternative schools in Purwokerto.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

(Education is a component in social life that functions to overcome social problems so as to create a better life. Through education, people are able to change themselves from dark situations to light. Thus, it is through education that the fate of a society, a nation, a country depends (Sindhunata in Buchori, 2001). Apart from that, the urgency of education is becoming increasingly significant, according to Sindhunata, because the future world driven by globalization today is a world that is based more on science and knowledge.

The world as imagined by Sindhunata above should be able to sterilize life from local-primordial problems. Uniquely, the current problems are actually triggered by local-primordial values which are spread through the results of science and knowledge, namely information technology. This latest technology in human civilization is actually used by certain groups in society to disseminate information, some of which is necessary and important for society, while others actually cause unrest and trigger feuds. These problems, on the one hand, actually make the long efforts of the government, private institutions, and the society in general to provide and administer education seem not to reap the results as expected. On the other hand, these problems show that the root of

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the problems that lie in education and are hidden behind science, knowledge and technology are humans themselves. If science, knowledge and technology are utilized for the benefit of the public, a life that prosper and liberate humans will be created. In contrast, if it is used for the interests of primordial or political groups, the result will be uncivilized human life.

Until now, community members' access to education is still a problem. The previous case of Tasripin who was unable to attend education because he had to take care of his three younger siblings and the emergence of alternative education in Gununglurah village - where Tasripin lives - namely MTs PAKIS shows that access to education is still a problem (Wulan, et al., 2020). If Darmaningtyas (2005) wrote that teacher poverty was still very low at that time, perhaps this is true for the period up to the beginning of the 21st century. This statement is also supported by the view in Wamena, Jaya Wijaya Regency, Papua Province, where until 2010 many elementary school teachers were also working as pedicab drivers. However, nowadays, the salaries of teachers and many other educators are quite adequate and have experienced more humane improvements. There are no longer any teachers and educators who have to carry out private tutoring to their students or work in other professions to earn extra money for their low salaries. This means, now that the Tasripin case (2013), low paid teachers (2005 and 2010) has passed, why do the problems above seem to not disappear in the reality of people's daily lives?! This rhetorical question certainly returns to the essence of education itself.

For Ki Hajar Dewantara (in Subhkan, 2014), one of the important components in education is *among* which contains the meaning of independence, volunteerism, democracy, order, peace, and conformity to circumstances and atmosphere. This kind of component seems to be missing in our world of education. The Indonesian education system is trapped in accreditation which actually makes schools orient their teaching and learning processes according to the assessment in the accreditation. In such situations, school orientation becomes simply a transfer of knowledge and improving students' academic achievement. This is also reflected in the understanding of members of society who view favorite and non-favorite schools only in terms of educational support facilities and the academic achievements of their students. Of course, every educational unit must equip itself with supporting facilities and be able to raise the academic achievements of its students. The problem is, if this becomes the orientation, it will produce a single-dimensional school that is never able to pay attention to the human development of its students.

According to Mulkhan (2017), the loss of one element in education could be the cause of personality inequality, as is now often the case in the reality of life in this country. Education is not just about pursuing the quality of the teaching and learning process and supporting facilities but, according to Mulkhan, a kind of character building that enables students to develop personalities that are conducive to living with other people and the natural environment in their daily lives. Mulkhan also sees indications that the realm of learning still emphasizes the classic division between cognition (rational knowledge), affection (awareness/personality), and psychomotor (skills). Meanwhile, in the new thesis, according to Mulkhan, learning should focus more on placing the realm of affection as the foundation of education. At this point, Mulkhan's statement coincides with liberating education as initiated by Paolo Freire.

Liberating education relies on the concept of *conscientizaco* (vigilance, awareness, sensitivity) initiated by Freire. This concept refers to an educational process that prioritizes efforts to make humans as a complete human beings. In this concept, Freire offers 3 phases of human consciousness: magical, naive, and critical (Siswanto, 2007). In other words, the urgency of the three phases of awareness in education according to Freire shows that humans are not yet in a position of complete humanity. Humans as conceived by Freire are humans who are autonomous towards themselves, reality and the world. Through this understanding, education must be directed towards a humanization process which, according to Freire, is capable of forming an ideal human being, namely a human being who achieves wholeness that originates from a human character who is self-aware and has freedom.

According to Frank Hearn (1985), freedom is actually a space for human reason to develop itself. Through this freedom, human reason is given the opportunity to be creative in managing human life itself. However, Hearn also sees that in today's modern society, human reason is disciplined and instrumented solely to create practical ways to achieve pragmatic human goals. Human reason has been enslaved by humans themselves. The schools which were initiated and developed by communities who care about education in Purwokerto, seem to be aware of this situation and are called upon to build education that is more oriented towards the process of humanizing humans.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is aimed at identifying, describing and explaining the interpretation of the concept of liberation education through local wisdom carried out by alternative schools in Purwokerto. This kind of research will begin in a grounded manner (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Creswell, 2007). In this case, the researcher does not prepare the research design deductively but inductively. The choice of such a design was made in order to provide researchers with free space to explore the data and information obtained. However, this research will not be carried out without direction because the researcher has determined the problem and research objectives even though both are flexible in following the developments in data and information obtained in the field.

This research was conducted in Purwokerto, Banyumas Regency, Central Java. In Purwokerto and its surroundings, several alternative schools have been established which are quite active in carrying out their activities. This condition is interesting because

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in Purwokerto itself there are formal public and private schools spread throughout the city. These considerations made this research possible to carry out in Purwokerto and its surroundings. In accordance with the research objectives, purposively, the subjects of this research were administrators and managers at the "Bhineka Ceria" Community School in Pabuaran, the "*Qaryah Thayyibah*" Elementary School in Kedungbanteng, and the "PAKIS" MTs in Cilongok. The data and information in this research were collected in 3 (three) ways, namely observation of the implementation of education, in-depth interviews with several alternative school administrators and managers, and documentation of scientific articles in research journals, textbooks, and other information from internet related to the objectives of this research.

From a process perspective, this research data was analyzed interactively/ongoing analysis (Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2014; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). In such a process, researchers carry out analysis, either simultaneously, iteratively, or back and forth between research components such as data collection, data display, data condensation, drawing conclusions, and writing reports. Meanwhile, the data and information that has been collected is analyzed using taxonomy and domain models (Spreadly, 1997). Through these two models, data is interpreted and analyzed according to the socio-cultural context in which this research was conducted. Finally, the data was validated using the Triangulation model. In this model, researchers guard against the possibility of bias by interviewing different targets (Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2014; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). For this reason, validation of data and information was carried out by interviewing parties from agencies related to education in Purwokerto, such as the Banyumas Regency Education Service and the Education Office and administrators of formal schools equivalent to alternative schools.

### **IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **A. Alternative Education**

Peoples believe that through education they can improve their quality of life (Miradj & Sumarno, 2014; Aini, et al., 2018; Sugiarta, et al., 2019). It is understandable that education is considered important. The problem is, it turns out that not all individuals in society are able to enter schools as official and formal institutions that facilitate educational needs. The main obstacle is cost. Getting an education through school is not free. The government has indeed exempted schools from all forms of fees for elementary and middle schools, known as the 9 (nine) year Compulsory Education Program. In fact, in several regions that have high original regional income (Pendapatan Asli Daerah/PAD), the program has been extended to 12 (twelve) years covering elementary, middle and high school education (Kompasiana, 2019). However, quite a few individuals in society are still unable to participate in education at these schools. School fees are free, but to fulfill this, other costs are required such as uniforms, shoes, bags, books, stationery and transportation. For affluent citizens, of course this is never a problem. In contrast, for other individuals of society whose daily lives are still filled with sweat and hard work, fulfilling all those things cannot be said to be a small amount of money. For them, another consideration arises, namely, instead of using money for school, it is better to go to the nearest school and after that working, helping their parents or work elsewhere, or get married - for girls.

The next issue is people's views about school. Schools are seen as only capable of providing reading, writing and arithmetic. Apart from schools being regard as unable to provide workers who are ready to work, schools are also seen as unable to educate their students as evidenced by the bullying, intolerance and violence that often occur in schools (Widaningtyas & Triyanto, 2017). The world of the future that is being driven by globalization today is a world that is more based on science and knowledge as taught in school. Such a world is often seen as distancing humans from their human character. Schools which considered as leading educational institutions need alternatives.

Schools that are "not schools", that is the alternative that appears. Educational needs in Purwokerto and its surroundings are no longer limited by buildings, sports fields, places of worship, and laboratory and extracurricular spaces. In fact, this kind of alternative also emerged without having to create a standard school structure. The curriculum and teaching methods in formal education are often accused of making students unable to develop their own abilities and talents (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Starting from this assumption, schools that were "not schools" or alternative schools emerged in Purwokerto and its surroundings develop and explore the abilities and potential of their students. This intention is the basis for the development of alternative schools such as Bhineka Ceria, SD *Qoriyyah Thoyyibah*, and MTs PAKIS. This article will try to present an identification of these three alternative education. Furthermore, discussions were also carried out on the practices carried out by the three educational institutions in providing educational services to their students.

#### **B. Alternative Education Practices in Purwokerto and Its Surrounding Areas**

Bhineka Ceria (BC) is not an educational institution as people usually imagine. When people come to BC, they will not see buildings with architecture like the school buildings that people often encounter and are stored in people's memories about what a school is. The building used by BC is a small house, built on land measuring approximately 100 m<sup>2</sup>. This house is used as the BC secretariat. BC volunteers often call it in a simple term "sekre". Inside there are several rooms that are used as offices and several other rooms that are often used for meetings and other gatherings as well as several training activities for volunteers. In these rooms there is no furniture like an educational institution, but only a few tables and chairs in the office room and carpets spread out in other rooms. The BC Secretariat has never been used to provide educational services to education participants.

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The "soul" of BC is in the existence of volunteers. BC is a non-profit based educational institution. BC provides educational services to other schools, other institutions, and even villages that request their "services." Not long ago, for example, BC collaborated with SD Semaya, in Sunyalangu village, Karanglewas District, Banyumas Regency. At the elementary school, BC volunteers become facilitators for the elementary school students to study together on Saturdays and Sundays. BC volunteers invite students to choose their own subjects that they want to deepen and provide assistance to students if they experience difficulties. In order to carry out its mission and duties to provide education, BC does not ask for fees at all. The volunteers work completely without pay. In fact, many non-profit and non-governmental social institutions or organizations (NGOs) utilize volunteers like that.

Uniquely, almost all of the volunteers at BC are students who are still actively studying at universities, in particular, Jenderal Soedirman University, Purwokerto (UNSOED). These students work voluntarily, both as administrators/managers of BC and as facilitators. They work on the sidelines of their study activities at UNSOED. When the cafes around the UNSOED campus become a place for students to hang out, the BC secretariat actually becomes a place for student who volunteers in BC to 'hang out' to discuss educational issues, plan activities to overcome these issues as far as they are able, and managing ongoing activities. No one forced them to come to the *sekre*. These student came to the *sekre* with their own awareness of the urgency of education for children.

BC itself carries out flexible education. BC's mission itself is: fostering youth social awareness; liberating education; and community service. It is hoped that through a mission like this, BC can bring the attention of the general public to issues surrounding education. BC, for example, never lacks volunteers who come not only from students but also from the general public such as midwives, college alumni, and several teachers at universities who take part in the activities carried out by BC, whether they come in person or by request. According to the Head of BC (the volunteers call him "Principal"), Juned - a student who is still studying in a study program at UNSOED, BC works based on a flexible curriculum. BC does not set a standard curriculum but rather adapts it to the activities to be carried out. Primarily, the curriculum is intended to introduce students to the environment when studying school subjects. Apart from that, BC also pays attention to children who have not had the opportunity to receive education and/or have dropped out of school.

To carry out all these activities, BC does not charge any fees at all. These activities, in fact, are funded by small businesses carried out by volunteers from student circles by selling cakes on campus. Apart from that, there are always benefactors who make donations to BC, such as BC alumni themselves who have formal work and several other groups. These financial revenues are all managed by the funding department at BC to finance all activities carried out by BC.

Meanwhile, the case is different with SD *Qoryah Thayyibah* Purwokerto (SD QT). SD QT – or known as "SD QiTa" – is a formal school. In other words, first of all, the building of SD QT is in the form of a school building like normal public schools: consisting of office space, classrooms, and a school yard as well as several facilities like school buildings in general. In SD QT, students wear uniforms and take lessons in classrooms. The teachers are professional teachers who are paid a regular salary by the foundation. Ultimately, QT Elementary School, which is in Karangsalam, Kedung Banteng District, Banyumas Regency and was founded in 2014, finally obtained an official operational permit from the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2019 through Decree no. 421.2/375/2019. This description shows that SD QT is a formal educational institution that is recognized by society and the state.

The character of liberation education as initiated by Paolo Freire cannot be captured if we only look at the physical existence of SD QT. Those who interested in liberation education will find it hard to believe if they come to this educational institution. The existence of professional teachers, students in uniforms, a regular school schedule of 5 (five) days per week will make people easily suspect that SD QT practices education as criticized by Freire, namely "bank-style" education. In this kind education model, students are like bank customers. As a good customer, he must comply with all bank regulations as represented by the teller and customer service (CS). Even if a CS helps resolve a problem faced by a customer and says, "Is there anything else that I can help you with...", it doesn't mean he is fully ready to help the customer, even it is just lip service, a sentence. This seems to mean, "When you are finished with your business, please step back or leave your seat so that other customers who are waiting can have their turn...". In such a situation, students become very passive, while teachers work according to all the rules set by the school. "Bank style" schools like this certainly do not give students the freedom to develop themselves, their interests and potential. SD QT, on the other hand, does not practice "bank-style" education at all.

SD QT does not position teachers as "teachers". At SD QT, teachers are motivators. It is the teacher's obligation to encourage students at SD QT to develop their own learning motivation according to their interests and desires. Teachers provide as much space as possible for students to develop students' creativity in thinking and skills in understanding the subject matter. To support the role of such teachers, SD QT has also developed a cooperative learning education model where, in essence, all students are involved in managing the classroom learning process. Students are asked to give opinions about classroom management. Of course, when giving an opinion, not all opinions are agreed upon but there are always differences of opinion. The teacher, in this situation, mediates differences of opinion while explaining a little about disputes that can threaten unity and cause divisions among students. Here, students are asked to consider the opinions of other friends before giving their opinion. In such a way, learning in class is more adhered to by students and the concept of "Loving Friends" also develops.

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The concept of "loving friends" not only means literally loving and being friendly with friends but is also related to the learning process developed at SD QT. Students are not left to study individually but learn together. This is also done to shape children's characters amidst their diversity. Learning is also directed as a space for children to process, both in understanding lesson material and looking for friends to study with. On this side, peer tutoring is formed among students, where students who have more abilities become tutors for other friends. Considering that SD QT also develops inclusive education - where children with special needs (*Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus/ABK*) are included in the same classes as those who are not ABK - then this kind of learning model is very helpful for the development of ABK themselves, both in increasing empathy towards ABK, treating ABK as friends, and help ABK better understand the lesson materials.

Liberation education does not bring students into a conventional school situation. In the philosophical language developed by *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs) PAKIS in Gununglurah, Cilongok District, Banyumas Regency, the educational foundation developed is "*lakune nyong rika pada*". Literally, this sentence means "my steps and your steps are the same". Education can not only be enjoyed by those who have it and city residents, but also anyone who needs it and lives anywhere. MTs PAKIS was named this way for two reasons. *Firstly*, PAKIS is one of the names of vegetables that are popular with residents and are easy to obtain because they are scattered in residents' gardens. *Second*, PAKIS is an abbreviation of the social values developed by the management of MTs PAKIS, namely Piety, Achievement, Knowledge, Integrity, and Sincerity. Through the development of PAKIS values, MTs PAKIS hopes to contribute to building humane people.

Education at MTs PAKIS which is student-centered learning has been developed for 10 years, since 2013. Education at MTs PAKIS is carried out in the classroom (in-door) and outside the classroom (out-door). The MTs PAKIS building is a building built on land covering an area of approximately 300 m<sup>2</sup> and consists of classrooms that are not partitioned off as well as several other smaller buildings (in the form of gazebos) and are also used as classrooms. The class at MTs PAKIS is more of a space for learning in which there are books and several computers. For MTs PAKIS, learning resources are everywhere and with anyone. In this sense, students do not have to study indoors but also outside.

The learning process is not determined and carried out by the teacher who is present in the class. The learning process is guided by volunteers. In this case, the person in charge of MTs PAKIS does not call himself the Principal but rather a volunteer. The volunteers themselves are not people who work at MTs PAKIS. A volunteer is anyone who is willing to guide and help students at MTs PAKIS to learn. The volunteers generally come from educated circles such as students and college lecturers in Purwokerto. It does not rule out the possibility that the volunteers who carry out learning activities at MTs PAKIS are local residents to improve students' abilities in farming, raising livestock, and keeping fish.

Students at MTs PAKIS are encouraged to develop themselves as widely as possible. As mentioned earlier, learning is not limited to just the classroom. At MTs PAKIS, students are invited to search for and identify their learning outcomes. Students are invited to carry out small research, trials, and exploration. Here, the mountain nature which surrounding the village that previously limited residents' access to formal education has turned into a vast laboratory classroom. Students are invited to become more familiar with the nature around them in their daily lives. This school in a forest village develops learning that cannot be separated from the local situation which is still very natural. Not only that, learning at MTs PAKIS is developed in such a way as to not be separated from the local wisdom of the community. The habits, norms and social values of society as well as the existence of parents and family are placed as the main learning sources for students. In this way, the learning process experienced by students and developed at MTs PAKIS cannot be separated from the local wisdom that surrounds it.

### C. Efforts to Humanize Humans through Education

Discussing education cannot be separated from the problems faced by community members themselves. As explained above, through education community members hope to improve their economic welfare (Subroto, 2014; Nugroho, 2014; Aini, et al., 2018). This means that the economic welfare of the community is still a main problem and education is seen and placed as an instrument to achieve more adequate welfare. Education, which is seen as having implications for economic prosperity, whether we realize it or not, has also been linked to social stratification. Those who are educated, therefore, are seen as being in a social class that is respected in the eyes of society. Considering that social class is not only the realm (arena) of class identification but also mental issues such as perseverance, persistence, and optimism (*habitus*) (Jatmiko & Abdullah, 2021; Maunah, 2015), education is also seen and placed as a reflection of one's 'classy' character for every educated individual.

In fact, education is not only oriented towards improving general welfare but also the formation of the human self, from childhood to adulthood. The problem is, educational practices through schools are often accused of dehumanizing humans (Christiana, 2013; Ilham, 2019; Abdul, et al., 2020). Schools are busy in improving the desired academic quality through accreditation. Achieving an accreditation score/degree seems to show the true quality of education. Transfer of knowledge is measured from the average subject test scores. The question is, does such education fulfill one of the important components of education according to Ki Hajar Dewantara, namely among, as explained earlier? Or, on the contrary, is this what Mulkan indicated earlier, where education has lost one of its own spirits, namely affection, because teachers and schools are busy with activities to meet the cognitive (rational knowledge) and psychomotor (skills) needs of their students?

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In educational practices in formal schools, students become both instruments and objects. First of all, it needs to be explained simply that what is called formal schools are schools that appear to have permanent buildings. These buildings are divided into classrooms, teachers' rooms, and other supporting rooms such as laboratory rooms, art rooms, meeting rooms, toilets and sports fields. Formal schools also have a clear organizational structure such as principal, deputy principal, skills teachers, teaching teachers, education staff and students. Furthermore, these schools practice education in accordance with national education standards, namely a structured and tiered educational path consisting of basic education, middle education and higher education (PPRI No. 19/2005, Chapter I, Ps 1, Paragraph 2) . This practice is also determined by 8 (eight) national education standards which include content, process, competency of graduates, educators and education personnel, facilities and infrastructure, management, financing and educational assessment (PPRI No. 19/2005, Chapter II, Ps 2 , Paragraph 1).

This is where such standardized schools easily slip in such a way when treating their students. Students are used as instruments and objects in pursuing standardized educational quality. Students, for example, must graduate with a predetermined length of study, must have certain minimum grades, and have certain skills. This is required because the implementation of formal education will be evaluated periodically based on those eight standards.

In reality, educational evaluation cannot be a starting point for improving the quality of formal education itself. On the contrary, the evaluation results are 'far burner from flame' – *jauh panggang dari api* (Raharjo, 2012). In addition, geographic issues for each school can be an obstacle to implementing the same standards and evaluation. It makes the actual accreditation score/degree unable to be called standard. We could compile a long list of problems related to national education standards, but the emergence of alternative education as found in this research shows the acuteness of these problems, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the emergence of the urgency of humanizing humans in the world of education cannot be disregard.

Education in general can be understood as an effort to enlighten a person or group of people. If we look through KBBI-Daring (Indonesian Online Dictionary), intelligent is defined as the perfect development of one's mind (KBBI Online, 2021). In this sense of intelligence, it can be concluded that education is an effort to develop the perfection of the human mind. However, through the same source, reason is interpreted variously from thinking power (the ability to understand and comprehend) to being interpreted as the ability to see or understand the environment. The series of reasons, namely mind, is defined as a combination of reason and feelings to weigh good and bad. Human reason and reason, thus, are the main components that shape his identity as a human and at the same time lead him to the reality of the truth he wants to achieve (Astini & Arsadi, 2021).

Basis from the assumptions above, education to enlight, emphasizes that the main goal of education is to humanize the people who participate in education itself. Any knowledge obtained through the educational process should be directed at making students discover their humanity through the knowledge they learn. Up to this point, there should be no problems because education is an instrument for developing and shaping humanity in human being. Yet, how to explain the bullying, violence and intolerance that continues (Tholkah, 2013; Agustian, et al., 2018; Putra, et al., 2021) and not only occurs in educational institutions but also in society in general? Educational practices, whether we realize it or not, have contributed to releasing humanistic sides and separating them from students.

The education practiced in formal schools, whether we realize it or not, is more directed towards what Paolo Freire called 'bank-style'. Teachers are like Customer Service (CS) or tellers at a bank, while students are bank customers themselves. CS and tellers work based on standardized bank rules in such a way that it is not permissible or possible for both of them (CS and teller) to deviate from these rules. Meanwhile, customers must also comply with bank regulations so that all problems related to their position as bank customers can only be resolved through CS. Based on this assumption, like CS and bank tellers, teachers work based on certain learning plans prepared by the teacher and refer to all the rules in government regulations. Students are served according to the rules in the learning plan - just like the bank customers. In such interactions, as obedient customers, students may be able to complete their education.

However, it must be realized that 'bank-style' interaction cannot compete with other 'schools' in the form of 'tutoring' (learning guidance institutions/*Bimbel*) which, it could be said, also practice such education. Without questioning the character of students, Tutoring provides educational services – in the form of courses – to students who are aware of their position as customers but are academically qualified (Wardani, 2012; Eriany, et al., 2014; Syahputra, 2017). In terms of academic results, formal schools are inferior to *Bimbel* institutions which openly practice 'bank-style' education. Apart from that, formal schools that are trapped in national standards in the field of education are also unable to practice humane education that is able to improve students' reasons and intellectual abilities so that they become human beings who are aware of themselves and their environment.

Alternative educational institutions, on the contrary, offer unconventional educational practices. Starting from the buildings of alternative educational institutions to the educational practices carried out, they are not what people imagine about educational institutions. The appearance of the buildings and educational practices at alternative educational institutions cannot be compared to formal schools. Education is not just about buildings.

SD QT in Purwokerto, for example, looks like a formal school. The school building consists of classrooms and teachers' offices, permanent teachers who are trained as professional teachers, students who wear uniforms and attend scheduled education, all of

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these seem to be clear characteristics of a formal school. But this is not the case if we look inside. In class, what happens is that the teacher only talks as necessary about the subject matter and then the students continue to study it through the books provided. The teacher only provides material – which is referred to as thematic – for around 1.5 (one and a half) hours and asks students to come forward to explain the examples. Next, students are asked to divide themselves into groups and discuss the lesson material with their group of friends. In a group, those who know better are obliged to teach those who don't know. Peer-Group Learning - or in SD QT language, it is called "study friends" - not only makes it easier to understand the teaching material. More than that, learning friends teach students togetherness, cooperation and helping each other. In this learning process, students not only gain a deep understanding of the teaching material, but they also learn to respect each other and not differentiate themselves from others on the basis of their academic abilities.

In more or less the same sense, peer-group learning at MTs PAKIS is known as the practice of '*lakune nyong rika padha*'. This practice not only invites students to build togetherness, cooperation and help each other. This pattern begins with the understanding that education is everyone's right so that no one should be left behind. In short, if someone can go to school then everyone can too. The educational practices carried out by MTs PAKIS are, first of all, based on the existence of volunteers. These volunteers are not paid and are not teachers. They are assigned to be motivators and educational facilitators. Volunteers are placed as figures who accompany, direct and guide students in understanding the lessons. Furthermore, the learning process does not only involve understanding the teaching material, but students are invited to take examples and practice the material that has been studied previously.

The geographical conditions which are still dominated by small forests around MTs PAKIS provide free space for students to explore. The local community situation which is still traditional is also a conducive space for students to know more deeply the values of local wisdom. In such learning, the "teacher" is not someone who is present in class and explains the teaching material but rather volunteers, fellow students, nature and even the community around them. Students not only learn to understand teaching material but also see firsthand its practices in everyday life. Students not only learn from facilitators and study friends but also from nature and society. They, for example, not only learn about herbivores through books and discussions but also see goat farms directly and learn about the characteristics of these plant-eating animals from existing breeders who live nearby.

Education cannot leave out aspects of pleasure and entertainment. These two aspects can actually attract students' attention and interest in the learning material. If not, the learning process becomes stiff and students become increasingly passive. In this research, BC (*Bhineka Ceria*) invites students to learn together while playing. The learning process carried out by BC is not carried out in the classroom but in any place that BC thinks is conducive. One implementation, for example, was carried out in Melung village, Kedungbanteng District, Banyumas. In this village, BC carries out two activities, namely rural economic empowerment and education. In terms of education, BC invites local children – who generally attend local public elementary schools – to study together. Children are grouped by class and accompanied by 1-2 BC volunteers for each group.

In the learning process, BC volunteers offer the children the teaching material they will study. Once determined, the children were asked to propose the problems they faced in studying the material and then the BC volunteers developed it in the form of a game. In Melung, the learning process was carried out at the Melung village hall. BC is not an educational institution like SD QT or MTs PAKIS. BC is an educational institution that defines the classroom as a place for learning only. This means that, apart from BC itself not having buildings that meet the requirements and can be said to be classrooms, the learning process is carried out in places where BC carries out activities with the community.

The learning method used by BC is more fluid, demanding and encouraging students to be more independent - in the sense of demanding students' will and interest - while also being carried out together through games. Learning process which is done with the games not only increases knowledge but is also able to increase interactions and relationships between students themselves (Rosarian & Dirgantoro, 2020). In this way, students do not lose themselves in the midst of their environment because learning is not competing in the academic field. Learning is a process of discovering oneself while appreciating the surrounding environment.

A quite important aspect in the learning process is students' interest in studying. In education practices of formal schools, students' interest in studying is presupposed. The presence of students in class is an indicator that is seen as showing interest in studying. In fact, several studies show that there are various ways in which formal schools manage and measure students' attendance in class (Christina, et al., 2019; Salam, 2020; Prathivi & Kurniawati, 2020). This proves that class attendance at formal schools is an important part of the learning process. The process of transferring knowledge in the classroom through providing structured teaching materials is also considered to be able to foster students' interest in studying. Several studies also show schools' efforts to develop the transfer of knowledge in various ways (Noya, et al., 2017; Supriyadi, et al., 2018; Sholihin, 2019; Yati, 2019; Misnatun, 2019).

However, those studies also show that the structured transfer of knowledge process actually hinders students' interest and it is necessary to carry out classroom actions which can essentially develop students' activeness and creativity. Transfer of knowledge – even if it is recognized as an inevitable learning process in education – can no longer be done by simply cramming information into students. Humans are not empty bottles that ready to be poured with water until it overflows. It must be remembered that education is not only achieved but experienced. This means that in the learning process, students do not just passively listen and are brought

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into the reality that has been prepared but it has been reduced as well. Students must be brought into an orientation to know, explore and criticize the reality that they find. For Ki Hajar Dewantara and Driyarkara, this is education that does not leave the environment where students are at namely family, college and movement (Asa, 2019) and what Paulo Freire calls problem-facing education (Junaedi, 2018).

For students, the education they take and experience should make them whole humans and make them part of everything that happens in their surrounding environment. One important aspect that needs to be adopted in the learning process is dialogue between those who provide teaching materials and their students. This dialogue can be carried out through various media such as technology in general that accompanies and is related to teaching materials, information technology, or direct dialogue.

Dialogue, first of all, does not place teachers like CS or bank tellers. In dialogue, a free space is opened for teachers and students to exchange views, information and perspectives. In such situations, dialogue also levels the stratification between the two so that the interaction that occurs allows the emergence of new ideas and creativity in understanding the learning material and the reality being discussed. Furthermore, the reality understood through dialogue is no longer covered by ideology, myth or power. Instead, reality becomes naked and ready to be criticized.

Dialogue, thus, brings students to become critical human beings in seeing themselves, other people, and the environment in which they find themselves. This is more or less what education was fought for by Paulo Freire where education is aimed at changing situations (reality) that are unequal and unfair. This is also the point of Freire's efforts to develop and build humane education (Fadli, 2020). This kind of education is considered liberating because education is oriented towards efforts to free and liberate humans from all forms of shackles and oppression.

The liberation education initiated by Freire requires change in humans themselves as the subject. Through open dialogue between teachers and students, it is actually possible to emerge conscientization, one of the important concepts in Freire's liberatory education. Conscientization refers more to the process of realizing humans as humans. This process of human awareness is related to oppressive systems and structures (Siswanto, 2007; Junaedi, 2018). Conscientization occurs gradually where at the initial level, humans simply accept the systems and structures that shackle and oppress them. It also be understood that human awareness in viewing such systems and structures originates from mistakes made by humans themselves. Ultimately, humans began to critically realize that the shackles and oppression they experienced came from the systems and structures in which they lived. Of course, this final awareness is the ultimate awareness as a human being, where behind the system and structure there are interests and power that must be changed so that human life becomes more equal and justice.

The development and openness of information technology today has enabled people to access various information from various parts of the world. Through information technology, the world is folded and packaged as attractively as take-away coffee cups in cafes. The cups are so fragile that they do not need to be stored but thrown away and then recycled. Likewise, the information appears to function well and is as useful as it should be. However, not all information can be accounted for in its accuracy and truth. In such a situation, education that only provides information to students only increases and fills students' thinking space and leads them to justify the realities offered. Such education will only give birth to cheerful robots who, in the words of Frank Hearn (1985), "...knows what to do but not why it is to be done.". Such students will ultimately only become small parts of the big machine of capitalism that limits, shackles and oppresses. Education must be able to enable students to make wise selections against this flood of information. This is where education must be returned to its basic orientation, namely building a humane human life.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In this research, our meaning and understanding of school is explored. The word school is generally interpreted as a place of learning that is organized and structured as in the sense of "public school" or "private school". The findings of this research shows that the understanding and meaning of school is returned to its true meaning, namely a place of learning. The alternative schools that are the subject of this research places learning both in the sense of places for learning subjects as taught in schools in the general sense and places of learning about life.

Alternative school brought the students to the awareness that the learning process is not only an effort to educate themselves but also their immediate surroundings. Alternative school students are also given as much space as possible to learn and experience the surrounding social environment which is rich in local wisdom values.

In this research alternative schools are: carry out student-centered learning; carry out the components of learning process such as: cognition, affection and psychomotor with an emphasis on the affective component; have "no teachers" but observers, motivators, facilitators; invite and give students the opportunity to choose their preferred learning materials; provide students with the opportunity to get to know the environment, conduct research, and experiment with the learning process; make students become human beings who are aware and sensitive to reality and the surrounding environment so that they do not forget local wisdom.

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