
Strengthening Character Education for Elementary School Students in School Settings

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Abstract

Character education is important to be implemented in students as early as possible and on an ongoing basis. School is a strategic place for character education because children from all walks of life will receive education at school. In addition, children spend most of their time at school, so what they get at school will affect the formation of their character. Therefore, character education must be applied to all levels of formal education, but a larger portion must be given to the elementary school level compared to other levels of education. This is because elementary school students are still not contaminated by bad qualities, so it is very possible to instill the noble character or character of our nation which will eventually stick in the souls of children until they grow up. In the practice of character education in schools, all components must be involved, including the components of education itself, namely curriculum content, learning and assessment processes, subject handling or management, school management, implementation of extracurricular activities or activities, empowering facilities and infrastructure, financing, and the work ethic of all members of the school/environment. Each component must mutually support the implementation of proper character education, cannot stand alone and must be sustainable.

Keywords – Character Education; Student Character; School Setting.



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1. Introduction

Strengthening moral education or character education in the current context is very relevant to overcoming the moral crisis that is currently sweeping our country. This crisis included increased promiscuity, rampant rates of violence against children and adolescents, crimes against friends, juvenile theft, cheating habits, drug abuse, pornography, and the destruction of other people's property which has become a social problem that until now has not been resolved. completely resolved, therefore how important character education is.

The government has scheduled the importance of character education to be implemented in schools and has become a national policy as outlined in laws and regulations. Almost all agreed that the moral crisis that hit this nation's generation was caused by the weakening of the nation's moral values in people's lives. This is thought to be caused by the lack of success in education that fosters character in schools. Today's formal education is more dominant in developing cognitive aspects rather than morals or character.

The issuance of a law on the national education system, Law no. 20 of 2003 reaffirmed the functions and objectives of national education, namely increasing faith and piety and fostering noble character in students. In article 3 of Law no. 20 of 2003 national education functions to develop capabilities and shape dignified national character and civilization in order to educate the life of the nation, aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative , independent, and become citizens of a democratic and responsible.

The function of national education is to maintain the values that exist in society so that they are preserved, as a means of developing society so that it becomes better and efforts to develop human resources so that individual potential can develop into human beings who are virtuous and become complete Indonesian people. This function is very difficult if only the government is charged

with this task, then support from all parties is needed to carry out the duties and functions of national education.

Building national character actually takes a long time and of course it must be done on an ongoing basis. The character that currently exists in Indonesian society recently did not happen in an instant, but has gone through a long process. Therefore, it must be accustomed from an early age.

The national education standards that serve as a reference for curriculum development, learning development efforts, assessments and educational goals in elementary schools have not been properly achieved. Because in the process of teaching and learning activities it is not in accordance with national education goals which refer to character and nation building. Character building must be developed and included in every learning material as well as in everyday life. As it is known that in the structure of the elementary school curriculum, the aspect of attitude has a larger portion than knowledge and skills. This is intended because elementary school is the initial education for students to build positive character for their future lives.



Figure 1. Balance of Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge in the 2013 Curriculum (Kunandar, 2013: 37)

Character education is not only the responsibility of the teacher, but also all education stakeholders must be involved in developing this character education, even policy makers must be the leading role models. As a teacher, he must work professionally, provide optimal service to his students, and work patiently in bringing his students towards educational goals.

Doni in Amirullah Syarbini, (2012: 22), argues, by placing character education within the framework of the dynamics of the individual formation process, educators such as teachers, parents, school staff, the community and others, are expected to be increasingly aware of the importance of character education as a means of forming guidelines behavior, enrichment of individual values by providing space for exemplary figures for students and creating an environment that is conducive to the growth process in the form of comfort and security which helps the atmosphere of self-development for one another in all its dimensions.

Based on the above, formally efforts to prepare conditions, facilities/infrastructure, activities, education, and curricula that lead to the formation of the character and character of the nation's young generation have a strong juridical foundation. However, this signal was only realized when there was a moral crisis that hit all levels of society. School-aged children are no exception. To prevent the moral crisis from getting worse, now this effort has begun to be initiated through national character education.

Character education is important to apply to students as early as possible and on an ongoing basis. Character education must be applied at all levels of education, but a larger portion must be given to the elementary school level compared to other levels of education. This is because elementary school students are still not contaminated by bad qualities, so it is very possible to instill the noble character or character of our nation which will eventually stick in the souls of children until they grow up. Therefore, this study will discuss several strategies for strengthening the character education of elementary students in school settings

2. Method

The method used is a literature study using descriptive analysis of data obtained from research articles and references relevant to research studies and theoretical references that are relevant to the cases or problems found related to

the character education of elementary school students in school settings. This journal review is based on a number of empirical and conceptual articles about character education settings in elementary schools.

3. Result and Discussion

Character Education

Human character and behavior is something dynamic. Things can change at any time, under any conditions and occasions. When the behavior is often done, it will become part of a person's personality. This process besides requiring habituation, at the same time requires the legitimacy of logical thinking. According to Fakrur Rozi (2012: 44) The purpose of character education is to form a nation that is tough, competitive, has noble character, is moral, tolerant, works together, has a patriotic spirit, develops dynamically, is oriented towards science and technology, all of which are imbued with faith and piety to God Almighty. based on Pancasila.

Character education which is the main issue in the world of education today is actually not something new. The background to the heating up of the issue of character education is the hope of fulfilling quality human resources born from education. Thus, the cultivation of character education is non-negotiable to be ignored, especially in learning at school, in addition to the family and community environment.

In general, these character values or manners describe attitudes and behavior in relation to God, oneself, society and the natural surroundings. Quoting Lickona's opinion (1991) which emphasizes three components of good character, namely moral knowing (knowledge about morals), moral feeling (feelings about morals), and moral action (actions/moral actions), which are needed so that children are able to understand, feel , and do good values.

There are 18 values in the development of cultural education and national character. The values above can be used by schools in determining priorities in instilling those values that are considered more important for character education,

which may differ from one institution to another. Instilling values must be instilled early on and supported by all parties involved for the effectiveness of the character education process. Masnur Muslich (2011: 88) reveals that the success of character education can be known through the attainment of indicators by students as stated in the Graduate Competency Standards.

The purpose of character education in schools is not to paint the color of personality in children, but is a natural interaction process based on the values of truth. The purpose of character education is as a process that brings students to understand and reflect on how a value is so important to be realized in everyday human behavior.

Characteristics of Elementary School Students

The characteristics of children at elementary school age (SD) that teachers need to know, so that they know more about the condition of students, especially at the elementary school level. These characteristics involve four aspects of development, namely physical, cognitive, social and emotional. Physical development consists of the development of gross motor and fine motor. Gross motor development is related to learning activities outside the classroom, Berk (2012: 397) states gross motor development consists of flexibility, balance, agility and strength.

In addition to gross motor development, students also experience fine motor development. Fine motor development is related to activities inside and outside the classroom with physical activities that are not as excessive as gross motor skills. Boyd & Bee (2009: 246) states that fine motor coordination improves writing, as well as playing most musical instruments, drawing, cutting, and many other task activities. Based on some of the opinions above, the physical development of students consists of gross motor and fine motor in the form of activities inside and outside the classroom that play a role in the learning process. Gross motor activity by maximizing the physical such as various sports activities. Fine motor activity with minimal physical activity such as various artistic activities.

Elementary school-age students, according to Piaget (Santrock, 2009: 55) enter the concrete operational stage that spans from 7 to 11 years which involves the use of operational concepts, logical thinking, and classifying skills. This is also in line with Slavin (2011: 45) that students at the age of 7-11 years in the concrete operational stage achieve an increase in the ability to think logically, new abilities include the use of operations that can be reversed, thinking is not centered, and problem solving is less constrained by egocentrism. , and can't think abstractly yet.

According to Rusman (2014: 251-252) The learning tendency of elementary school age children has three characteristics, namely concrete, integrative and hierarchical. Concrete implies the learning process moves from concrete things that can be seen, heard, smelled, touched and manipulated, with an emphasis on using the environment as a learning resource that is optimized for achieving quality learning processes and outcomes for elementary school-age children. Integrative means viewing something learned as a whole and integrated. Hierarchical is developing gradually from simple things to more complex things, so that a logical sequence and relatedness and breadth of material are needed.

Based on the above opinion, it can be concluded that elementary students in their intellectual development are easy to understand something concrete and logical. It is also easy for students to understand information sequentially from easy to difficult things. Elementary students still cannot think abstractly. The implication of this development is that learning materials are close to the students' environment.

School is a new environment for students in SD, different from the previous stage which was only influenced by family and environment. Students need to build interactions with the new environment (school). Santrock (2009: 120) states that schools give students a source of ideas to shape themselves. The school environment helps students to find themselves through interactions with teachers and other students.

The social development of students in elementary schools goes hand in hand with cognitive development. This is in line with Slavin (2011: 101) when students'

concentration power grows, they can spend more time on selected tasks, and they enjoy completing projects. This stage also includes the growth of independent action, collaboration with groups, and social appearance. This social development shows that students can interact with each other to complete projects.

Based on the opinion above, it can be concluded that students' social development is having the ability to interact with others to complete projects. Students also interact to achieve self-understanding.

Social development also accompanies the emotional development of elementary school students. This is in line with Berk (2012: 456), namely when students are involved in social comparisons and are increasingly concerned with peer approval, they must learn to manage negative emotions that threaten their self-esteem. Therefore, students interact with others in order to be able to regulate their own emotions. Emotional development is related to emotional regulation and self-esteem.

The role of the teacher is important to maintain the stability of student self-esteem. Santrock (2009: 128) states that student self-esteem is different in different fields. So the teacher needs to understand the differences in each student.

Based on the above opinion, it can be concluded that the emotional development of students is self-esteem and emotional regulation. Self-esteem is related to the views of others on their self-image. Emotion regulation deals with managing emotions towards social comparison.

Based on several opinions about the characteristics of elementary school students, it can be concluded that student characteristics are influenced by the surrounding environment including the school environment, where students interact with school residents.

The Role of the School Component in Strengthening Character Education

Education as an agent of change should be the main weapon to shape one's character. It is hoped that in the future, printed graduates will be able to build the nation without leaving noble character values. One effort to realize this is

education that equips students with noble character values. National education has a mission to develop perfect human beings (human beings). Building a nation with a complete identity requires an education system that has holistic materials, and is supported by good management and implementation.

School is a strategic place for character education because children from all walks of life will receive education at school. In addition, children spend most of their time at school, so what they get at school will affect the formation of their character. The school environment needs to be a role model or model for the learning process and student education. This is because the practice of education at every level is not just the development of students' reasoning, but also the formation of good morals and virtuous reasoning.

Novan (2013:70-72) operationally states the purpose of character education in school settings as follows, 1) Strengthen and develop life values that are considered important and necessary so that they become a distinctive personality of student ownership as well as the values developed. The goal is to facilitate the strengthening and development of certain values so that they are manifested in children's behavior, both while still in school and after graduation. 2) Correcting student behavior that is inconsistent with the values developed by the school. This goal has the meaning that the purpose of character education has the goal of straightening various negative behaviors of children into positive ones. 3) Building harmonious connections with family and society in acting out shared character responsibilities. This goal means that character in schools must be linked to the educational process in the family.

In the practice of character education in schools, all components must be involved, including the components of education itself, namely curriculum content, learning and assessment processes, subject handling or management, school management, implementation of extracurricular activities or activities, empowering facilities and infrastructure, financing, and the work ethic of all members of the school/environment. In line with this, Peterson and Deal (Zuchdi, 2011: 148) state that each school component plays a different role. They are

responsible for the continuity of the school's structure and activities, procedures and policies, programs and resources, as well as the standards and rules that apply in schools. They also play a key role in shaping the school culture by communicating the vision and mission of the school, articulating and maintaining positive values, norms and habits, and appreciating every achievement that is obtained by the school community.

Overall, the roles that can be played by each component of the school in realizing a commendable character-based school culture are as follows, 1) Headmaster. The role played by the school principal in building a character-based school culture is indeed very decisive, namely carrying out continuous coaching in terms of modeling, teaching, and strengthening good character (reinforcing) for all school members (teachers, students, and employees). Principals must be role models for teachers, employees, students, and even parents/guardians of students. Regularly and continuously the principal must communicate with the school community regarding the realization of the school's culture. Some things that need to be considered by the principal in realizing a school culture with character are as follows. (a) Striving or trying hard to model oneself or be a model for all teachers, employees and students. (b) Encourage all teachers and employees to be good character models for all students. (c) Providing time in a continuous cycle, for teachers to plan and implement the integration of certain character values into the subject matter of each subject. (d) Organizing certain activities that support culture and inculcation of character in the school environment. 2) Teacher. The role of the teacher is very important in the implementation of character education for students, because they interact directly and continuously in the learning process. Teachers must prepare various choices and strategies to instill every value, norm, and habit into every subject they teach. The teacher is a direct model for students, therefore the teacher must have attitudes as a character educator. 3) Family. Parents/guardians of students can be involved in cultural activities and character building through several activities. Parents/guardians of students actively participate in routine or rotating

activities carried out by the school in meetings between parents/guardians of students with homeroom teachers and class teachers. 4) School and community committees. The school together with the school committee and the community jointly compiles an activity that can support the establishment of good character culture and cultivation for all school members. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that in an effort to develop character education in schools, all components in it must be involved.

Strategies for Strengthening Character Education in School Settings

Character education is not a one-time job like turning a hand, because it involves a process that is not simple which is inherent in the administration of the school itself. At the same time because it involves the formation of character or morals as a whole which is inherent in and builds a complex human being. Therefore, in the school environment it is necessary to carry out several activities that stimulate the growth of the positive characteristics of students.

The Curriculum Center of the Ministry of National Education (Muchlas Samani, 2011: 145-146) suggests four things to develop character education in relation to self-development as follows, 1) Routine activities are activities carried out by students continuously and consistently at any time, for example flag ceremonies every Monday, class pickets, congregational prayers, prayers before and after lessons, and so on. 2) Spontaneous activities are spontaneous, on the spot, at certain times, for example collecting donations for victims of natural disasters, visiting sick or suffering friends, and so on. 3) Exemplary is the emergence of students' attitudes and behavior because they imitate the behavior and attitudes of teachers and education staff at schools, for example the neatness of clothes worn, discipline, order and order, mutual care and affection, and so on. 4) Conditioning, creating conditions that support the implementation of character education, for example neat spatial conditions, clean toilet conditions, provided trash cans, shady school grounds.

Masnur Muslich (2011: 86-87) explains that character education can be integrated into learning in each subject. Subject matter related to norms or values

in each subject needs to be developed, made explicit, linked to the context of everyday life. Thus, learning character values is not only at the cognitive level, but touches on internalization, and real experiences in the daily lives of students in society.

Extracurricular activities that have been held by schools so far are also one of the potential media for character building and improving student academic quality. Through extracurricular activities it is expected to develop abilities and a sense of social responsibility, as well as students' potential and achievements.

Muchlas Samani (2011: 144), reveals that strategy can be interpreted in relation to curriculum, character models, and methodology. The strategy in relation to the curriculum, the strategy that is commonly used by schools is to integrate character education into teaching materials, meaning not to make a separate character education curriculum. Then, the relation to the character model is that all teaching staff, such as the principal, all teachers, and all Guidance and Counseling, as well as administrative staff in schools must be able to become good role models. Strategies in terms of methodology, common strategies that are carried out in efforts to develop character education include cheerleading, praise and reward, define and train, define-and-drill, enforce discipline. -formality), and temperament this month (traith of the month).

Paul Suparno (Zubaedi, 2011: 243-245) revealed that there are four ways of delivering what is called the delivery of character education in schools as follows, 1) Separate subject: this approach model is considered as a separate subject that has the same position and is treated the same as other subjects or fields of study. 2) Integrated in all fields of study: This approach is delivered in an integrated manner in each subject, selecting character education material that is in accordance with the theme or subject matter of the field of study. 3) Outside of teaching: strengthening values with this model prioritizes processing and instilling values through an activity that has character values. This model is not structured within the framework of education and teaching in schools. 4) Combined model: using a combination of integrated models and models outside the lesson. The

inculcation of formal teaching values is integrated together with activities outside the lesson.

In addition, Agus Wibowo (2012: 84) reveals that the development of cultural and national character education values can be integrated in every subject matter of each subject. These values are listed in the syllabus and lesson plans. The development of these values in the syllabus is carried out in the following ways, 1) Review the Basic Competency in Content Standards to determine whether the cultural values and character of the nation listed have been included in it. 2) Using a table that shows the relationship between KD and values and indicators to determine the values to be developed. 3) Include cultural values and national character in the table into the syllabus. 4) Include the values that have been stated in the syllabus to the lesson plans. 5) Develop an active learning process that allows students to have the opportunity to internalize values and demonstrate them in appropriate behavior. 6) Provide assistance to students, both those who have difficulty internalizing values and demonstrating them in behavior.

Character education in schools is also closely related to school culture and school management or management. The management in question is how character education is planned, implemented, and controlled adequately in educational activities in schools. This management includes, among other things, the values that need to be instilled, curriculum content, learning, assessment, educators and education staff, and other related components. Thus, school management is an effective medium for character education in schools.

Meanwhile, in any extra-curricular activities held by the school, depending on the specific types and objectives of the extra-curricular activities, values are always developed. In sports activities, the values of sportsmanship, following the rules of the game, cooperation, courage, and teamwork always appear. As with scout activities, they can also develop character values through outdoor activities, indoor activities, and singing and clapping.

Character education methods are also very important, Lickona (Muchlas Samani, 2011: 147) suggests several character education methods as follows, 1) Storytelling method or storytelling (Telling Story). This method is almost the same as the lecture method, it also requires teacher improvisation. For example through changes in expression, gestures, changing voice intonation. The use of simple picture aids, simulation tools or devices to support the story. The most important thing is that the teacher must make conclusions with students. 2) Discussion Methods and Various Variants. In learning generally discussions consist of two kinds, group discussions and class discussions (whole group). In the end the teacher emphasizes the important things about the problem that has been solved, adds things that are missing from the discussion, and makes final conclusions with students. 3) Simulation method (role playing and sociodrama). The simulation method is carried out with the aim that students acquire certain skills, understand a concept or principle, and aim to solve a problem that is relevant to character education. 4) Cooperative Learning Methods. This cooperative method is considered the most effective, because in practice it develops character values. These values include cooperation, independence, openness, tolerance, respect for the opinions of others, courage to think, polite to speak, analytical, critical, logical, creative, and dynamic. 5) Active Student Method. The active student method emphasizes processes that involve children from the start of the lesson. The teacher gives the subject matter and the children in the group seek and develop the next process. Children make observations, discussions, analyzes up to the process of concluding their activities. 6) Value Clearing Method. This method is carried out with active dialogue in the form of sharing or in-depth and intensive discussion. Students are invited to critically look at the values of life that exist in society and behave towards these situations. The clarification of values in life is very important, because if contradictions or biases about values are allowed and seem to be justified, there will be a confusion of views in living together.

Doni A. Kusuma proposes 5 (five) character education methods (in application in school institutions) namely teaching, exemplary, setting priorities,

practical priorities and reflection. 1) Teach. Conceptual understanding is still needed as a provision for value concepts which then become a reference for the embodiment of certain characters. Teaching character means giving students an understanding of certain value structures, virtues, and benefits. Teaching values has two benefits, first, providing new conceptual knowledge, second, being a comparison of the knowledge students already have. Therefore, the teaching process is not a monologue, but involves the participation of students. 2) exemplary. Humans learn more from what they see. Exemplary occupies a very important position. The teacher must first have the character to be taught. Students will imitate what the teacher does rather than what the teacher does. Exemplary does not only come from teachers, but also from all human beings in these educational institutions. Also sourced from parents, close relatives, and anyone who is often in contact with students. At this point, character education requires a complete educational environment, teaching each other character. 3) Set priorities. Clear prioritization must be determined so that the evaluation process for the success of character education can be clear, without priorities, character education cannot be focused and therefore cannot be judged successful or unsuccessful. Character education collects a set of values that are considered important for the implementation and realization of the institution's vision. 4) Priority praxis. The character priority is the proof that the character priority is implemented. Educational institutions must be able to verify the extent to which predetermined priorities can be realized in the educational environment through various elements that exist within educational institutions. 5) Reflection.

Things that have been experienced are still separate from self-awareness as long as they have not been associated, reflected with the contents of one's consciousness. Reflection can also be referred to as a process of reflecting, making oneself aware of events/concepts that have been experienced. Each component must mutually support the implementation of proper character education, cannot stand alone and must be sustainable.

4. Conclusion

Character education can be understood as an effort to cultivate intelligence in thinking, appreciation in the form of attitudes, and experience in the form of behavior that is in accordance with the noble values that become one's identity, manifested in interactions with one's God, oneself, one another and the environment.

Character education is important to apply to students as early as possible and on an ongoing basis. Character education must be applied at all levels of education, but a larger portion must be given to the elementary school level compared to other levels of education. This is because elementary school students are still not contaminated by bad qualities, so it is possible to instill the noble character or character of our nation, which in the end will stick in the souls of children until they grow up.

Planting character education needs a process, exemplary examples, and habituation or acculturation in the student environment including the school environment. In practice, all components must be involved, including the components of education itself, namely curriculum content, learning and assessment processes, subject handling or management, school management, implementation of extracurricular activities or activities, empowerment of facilities and infrastructure, financing, and work ethic. all members of the school/neighborhood. Each school component has its own role, where these components cannot stand alone and must be sustainable in the implementation of student character education.

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