



Character-Based Curriculum Management in Elementary Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze character-based curriculum management at the elementary education level, focusing on the aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Character education is urgent in facing the challenges of globalization, technological advances, and the moral degradation of the younger generation. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach through literature studies and in-depth interviews with elementary school teachers in urban and suburban areas. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of character values in the curriculum still faces various obstacles, such as the lack of teacher competence in integrating character values in the lesson plan, minimal support from school management, and pressure on academic achievement. However, the success of several schools in building a character culture through synergy between principals, teachers, and parents proves the importance of targeted curriculum management. This study recommends increasing teacher training and strengthening collaboration between stakeholders as strategic steps to strengthen character education in elementary schools

INTRODUCTION

Elementary education is the initial and most fundamental phase in the formation of children's personality and character. At this stage, students are in a period of development that is greatly influenced by the environment, learning experiences, and role models they receive at school. Along with the increasing challenges of the times, such as the flow of globalization, rapid technological advances, and the emergence of various social problems among the younger generation, character education is no longer an additional discourse, but rather an urgent need in the national education system.

In this context, character education becomes an integral part of the goals of national education, as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes the importance of developing the potential of students to become people who are faithful, pious, have noble morals, and have noble personalities. The curriculum, as the main tool in the education process, has a strategic role in transforming character values to students. However, the effectiveness of character education is highly dependent on how the curriculum is designed, implemented, and evaluated in a focused and sustainable manner.

The problem that has emerged today is the suboptimal management of character-based curriculum at the elementary education level. Many teachers do not yet have sufficient competence in planning the integration of character values into the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), as well as the lack of systemic support from school management in creating a culture that supports character strengthening. In addition, limited learning time and pressure on academic achievement are also obstacles in implementing character education effectively. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how character-based curriculum management is applied to elementary education, covering aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation. This study also explores the supporting and inhibiting factors for the implementation of character-based curriculum, with the hope of making a real contribution to improving the quality of character education at the elementary education level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum management includes the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum. Character education according to the Ministry of Education and Culture includes religious, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity values. Integration of character values can be done explicitly or implicitly in learning.

1. *Integration of Character Values in the Curriculum*

Integration of character values in the education curriculum is an important effort to shape the personality of students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have noble character. In this case, the curriculum does not only focus on mastering academic subject matter, but also prioritizes character formation such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and empathy. This approach is important to create individuals who have a balance between emotional and intellectual intelligence. Along with the development of the times, character education in the curriculum has become very relevant,

considering the moral and social challenges faced by the younger generation today.

The importance of integrating character values in the curriculum is not only limited to religious education subjects, but also includes all other subjects. Values such as discipline, cooperation, and respect can be applied in various contexts, both in daily interactions inside and outside the classroom. Thus, each subject becomes a means to introduce and instill these values in students' lives, so that they can practice good character in their daily lives. This approach requires teachers and all education managers to have a deep understanding of the importance of character values in shaping national identity.

The successful implementation of character integration in the curriculum requires full support from all parties, from the government, educational institutions, to students' families. In this context, regular evaluation is needed to measure how effective the curriculum is in shaping students' character. Therefore, it is important to continue to develop teaching methods and strategies that not only emphasize academic achievement, but also attention to the development of students' morals and ethics in every aspect of education.

2. The Role of Principals and Teachers in Curriculum Management

Principals and teachers play a very important role in managing an effective and relevant curriculum. As a leader in an educational institution, the principal is responsible for ensuring that the curriculum implemented is in accordance with the established educational vision and mission. The principal not only oversees the implementation of the curriculum, but also inspires all teaching staff to create a learning environment that is conducive to the development of character and intelligence of students. Good leadership from the principal can create a school culture that emphasizes moral values, discipline, and a sense of responsibility.

On the other hand, teachers have direct responsibility in implementing the curriculum in the classroom. They are the spearheads in transforming learning materials and character values to students. A teacher must have the ability to integrate these values into every learning activity, both explicitly and implicitly. In addition, teachers also need to always innovate in teaching methods so that learning materials are not only fun, but can also inspire students to instill good moral values in everyday life.

In curriculum management, principals and teachers must work together well in designing educational programs that support common goals, namely creating a generation that is not only intelligent, but also has character. This requires effective communication between principals, teachers, and all other school components, including parents of students. Therefore, training and competency development for principals and teachers are very important aspects so that they are able to carry out their duties well and bring positive changes to the world of education.

3. Case Study of Elementary Schools Implementing Character Curriculum

A case study of elementary schools implementing character curriculum shows how important it is to implement moral values from an early age. One successful example can be found in several elementary schools that integrate

character values into every aspect of learning, both through in-class and out-of-class activities. In these schools, in addition to teaching academic subjects, teachers also emphasize the development of values such as honesty, cooperation, and respect for others. This approach not only shapes students' cognitive intelligence, but also prepares them to become individuals with integrity and social concern.

In its implementation, elementary schools that implement a character curriculum often carry out activities that support the formation of student character, such as extracurricular activities, group discussions, and social programs that involve students in community service. This aims to provide students with direct experience on how to apply character values in real life. In addition, the character curriculum is also often supported by a teaching approach that involves parents of students to work together in shaping their children's moral values.

This case study also shows that the success of implementing a character curriculum is highly dependent on the commitment and involvement of all parties in the school, from the principal, teachers, to parents. Close collaboration between schools and families in supporting character education will strengthen the positive impact of the curriculum on students' personal development. Thus, it can be concluded that the character curriculum in elementary schools is not only about teaching knowledge, but also about shaping the character of the younger generation who are ready to face future challenges well.

Previous Research

Several previous studies have examined the importance of character education in the context of curriculum management at the elementary level. Suyanto (2013) emphasized that character education cannot stand alone as a separate content, but must be integrated thoroughly into all educational activities, including the learning process and school culture. He highlighted the need for internalization of values through a comprehensive and contextual approach.

Furthermore, Wahab and Umiarso (2011) studied the management of character education curriculum in elementary schools and found that the success of character education implementation is highly dependent on collaborative curriculum planning. The active involvement of principals, teachers, and parents in preparing and implementing the curriculum contributes significantly to shaping the character of students.

Research by Hidayati (2016) shows that an integrative thematic learning approach in elementary schools can be an effective means of inserting character values. In practice, teachers can instill the values of responsibility, empathy, and cooperation through contextual learning scenarios that are integrated with the subject themes.

From a theoretical perspective, Lickona (1991) in his book *Educating for Character* emphasizes that effective character education requires synergy between teaching values through the curriculum, exemplary teacher behavior, and a supportive school culture. This idea is one of the important theoretical foundations in the development of character education globally and nationally.

Meanwhile, Mulyasa (2014) examines the role of school management in supporting the implementation of character-based curriculum. He emphasized that the principal must act as a learning manager who is able to create a conducive learning environment and ensure the implementation of character education consistently.

From a policy perspective, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (2010) through the Character Education Strengthening Program (PPK) has determined five main values that must be integrated into the curriculum, namely religious, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity. This program is the direction of national policy that supports the implementation of a character-based curriculum systematically.

Thus, previous studies generally confirm that the success of character education is greatly influenced by the quality of curriculum management, the involvement of all stakeholders, and the integration of character values in every aspect of learning.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to understand and describe phenomena in depth based on the perspective of participants. The methods used include literature studies and in-depth interviews. Literature studies are conducted to collect information from various relevant written sources, such as books, journals, and official documents, in order to build a theoretical basis and research context. Meanwhile, in-depth interviews were conducted with three elementary school teachers in urban and suburban areas, with the aim of obtaining rich and in-depth empirical data on the implementation of character values in the curriculum. The data analysis technique in this study used an interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman. This model consists of three main components that take place cyclically and interactively: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. Data reduction is done by filtering and simplifying the data that has been collected to focus on relevant information. Data presentation is done by arranging the data in an organized form, such as a matrix or table, to facilitate understanding and analysis. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification, where researchers identify emerging patterns or themes and ensure the validity of the findings through a process of triangulation and in-depth reflection.

The data analysis process is carried out continuously and iteratively, where the researcher continuously moves between the three components of the analysis during data collection. This allows the researcher to develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied, and ensures that the resulting interpretation truly reflects the reality on the ground. Thus, this approach provides a systematic and flexible framework for analyzing complex qualitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *Planning*

At the planning stage, teachers not only determine cognitive learning outcomes, but also explicitly include character building objectives in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP). Character values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and empathy are formulated as an integral part of the learning objectives. In addition, teachers choose contextual and participatory learning methods, such as project-based learning, case studies, and role play, which are able to foster awareness of values and allow students to directly experience the application of character in real situations.

2. *Implementation*

At the implementation stage, strengthening character education is carried out through various approaches. First, the habituation of positive values is carried out consistently both inside and outside the classroom. Second, teacher role models are a key aspect, where teacher attitudes and behaviors become real models for students. Third, character values are integrated into the learning process through discussions, joint reflections, and reinforcement of values in the context of teaching materials. In this way, students not only understand the concept theoretically, but are also encouraged to internalize and practice it in everyday life.

3. *Evaluation*

Assessment of student character is carried out holistically and continuously. Teachers use observation techniques during the learning process to observe students' attitudes, behaviors, and social interactions. In addition, student reflections through personal journals or discussion forums are important sources of information in assessing character development. This assessment is not merely summative, but more formative in nature, aimed at guiding the process of student character growth as a whole.

4. *Supporting Factors and Obstacles*

The success of character education implementation is largely determined by several supporting factors, the main ones of which are the availability of training for teachers to understand and implement character education effectively, as well as the creation of a school culture that supports positive values. A conducive school culture includes harmonious relationships between school members, regulations that support character development, and support from school leaders. On the other hand, the main challenges that are often faced are time constraints in learning which make the integration of character education less than optimal, as well as the lack of understanding of some teachers regarding the concept and strategy for implementing character education as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Character-based curriculum management is the main foundation in forming students' personalities holistically from an early age. The implementation of a curriculum that integrates character values into every aspect of learning not only strengthens the cognitive dimension, but also fosters students' affective and psychomotor dimensions in a balanced manner.

Therefore, it is very important for educational institutions to provide ongoing training to teachers so that they have a deep understanding and practical skills in integrating character values into the learning process. In addition, school management support is the key to success, especially in creating a school environment and culture that is conducive to character building. A strong culture will strengthen the internalization of positive values and become an ecosystem that encourages students to grow as individuals with noble character, are responsible, and contribute positively to society.

FURTHER STUDY

This study still has limitations, so further research is needed related to the topic of Character-Based Curriculum Management in Elementary Education so that this study can be perfected and increase insight for readers.

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