

## Strategies and Implementation of Character Education Empowerment Management through Islamic Cultural Schools in Dempet District

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### Article Info

History Articles

Received:

5 March 2020

Accepted:

12 April 2020

Published :

17 June 2020

Keywords:

Strategy,

Character Educational,

Islamic Schools

### Abstract

Nowadays, character education is required to educate learners so they will be excellent individuals. Many schools take various ways to apply strategies to succeed in character education programs. Besides nurturing the characters at home, done by parents, the educational institution also plays a great role to develop children's characters. This research used a qualitative approach. The data were collected through in-depth interview, observation, and documentary study. The data analysis used data reduction, display, and conclusion. The findings consisted of 1) the Islamic school character-building strategies in Dempet applied Islamic habituations. They were such as reading Asmaul Husna and reciting Al-Qur'an together in the morning before getting into the class and starting the learning; 2) the implementation of character educational empowerment was done through Islamic cultures in Dempet district. It could be done by providing memorization tasks of Al-Qur'an verses. Every class should have different memorization level and should apply extracurricular to educate the learners to have excellent characters, and 3) the engaged hindrances during its implementation were lacks of parents' controls. Thus, the learners tended to have bad personalities while being at school or home.

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p-ISSN 2252-6390

e-ISSN 2502-4442

## INTRODUCTION

Character education is an effort to influence learners' characters. It is intentionally done to facilitate individuals. Thus, they could understand, pay attention, and apply the ethical values or morals in daily lives. Character education has important roles in developing a nation. A nation that has characters and personalities will be much more qualified than those without them.

A developing country, i.e. Indonesia, is still improving its character and personality education. They are realized into its applied curriculum and education at educational institutions, such as schools. Character is assumed as valuable human behaviours correlated to God the Almighty, personally, to each other, environment, and nationality which are realized in mind, behaviour, feeling word, and action based on religious norms, laws, manners, cultures, customs, and aesthetics. All components should be involved to realize school character education, including the educational components such as curriculum, learning process, learning assessment, relationship quality, course management, school management, activity promotion, extracurricular, infrastructure empowerment, funding, the ethos of school citizens, and school environment.

Indonesia needs sufficient and adequate human resources as the main establishment supports. Therefore, education has important roles to meet such human resources. It is in line with the Law Number 20 the Year 2003 Article 3 about National Education System. It says national education functions to develop and build dignified national characters and civilizations to education the national life. National education aims to develop learners' potencies to be faithful human, to have *Taqwa* to the Almighty, to have valuable characters, to be healthy, to be creative, independent, reliable, and to be democratic and responsible citizens. Based on the functions and objectives, education at each level, included Junior High School, should be promoted systematically to reach the objectives.

School-moral education is needed for the learners so that they have a more dignified personality. Character education should be instilled as soon as possible, started from the smaller unit, i.e. family before children get into the educational world. Family is an intellectual and moral developmental foundation. On the other hand, schools have important roles to help parents to be excellent parents and to build strong and successful learners' characters academically (Lickona, 2012: 49).

Characters could be fostered through continuous habit or culture instillment in children's lives. A good habit should also foster an excellent personality for learners. On the other hand, social environments and peer friends also influence learners' character developments. In addition to the family and social environments, the school environment also has important roles in fostering children's characters. At school ages, many children spend their times at schools so that they could socialize, create friendship, and relationship toward their teachers.

Character education implementations are varied from one school to another. Schools perceive character education differently. Each school is aware of what characters should be primarily applied by a learner. School cultures and environments are correlated with character education at each school.<sup>1</sup> The same thing also goes with history beyond the school location while it was being built. For examples, urban schools will have different cultures in suburban schools. Urban schools seem to have ignorant characteristics, either from a social or religious aspect. However, suburban schools have more social relationship sensitivity and strong-religious awareness.

Character education implementation fosters excellent personality to engage in various problems. It allows learners to have a responsibility while engaging with a problem. Character education academically is equal to the value and moral educations. Thus, learners could develop their skills to make a proper decision, to maintain what has been good, and to

wholeheartedly apply the good deed in daily life (Zuchdi, 2010: 3).

Every school character education implementation is different from one to another. School perceives which characters should be built. School character education is usually backgrounded by school cultures and environments. The school site has also cultural backgrounds. For examples, urban schools will have different culture to suburban schools. Urban schools tend to have ignorant attitudes from religious and social aspects. However, suburban schools are sometimes more sensitive about social relationship and strong religious awareness.

The strategy in character education in each school is different. Each school also has different obstacles in the implementation of it. Based on those background, the purpose of this research was to describe strategies in the character education implementation using culture way in Islamic Schools, the implementation, and the obstacles of it in each school. Therefore, the implementation of character education could be implemented properly.

## METHODS

This research used qualitative research. This research was carried out in Islamic schools in Dempet district. The main sources were interview results with the Principals, Guidance and Counseling teachers, Social Study teachers, *Aqidah Ahlaq* (Value and Moral) teachers, and Civics teachers. This research focused on school cultural development strategy to support character education at Islamic Junior High Schools (MTs) in Dempet district, the character education implementation through the schools' cultures, the hindrances of promoting character education through school culture, and the main roles of Social study lesson to foster the learners' characters.

This research took Islamic schools in Dempet district. The data were collected by in-depth interview, direct observation, and documentation study. The researchers interviewed,

observed, and documented the three schools directly. They were MTs Miftahu Huda Brakas, MTs Nurul Huda Dempet, and MTs Nurul Huda Kramat.

By referring to the validity of the expected obtained data, this research applied data source or source triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodology triangulation. Meanwhile, the data analysis applied interactive data analysis consisting of *data reduction*, *data display*, and *conclusion drawing or verification*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Character education fosters an individual's personality and could be seen in his actions such as well-behaving, being responsible, respecting other, working hard, and so on. It does not only cover which one is right or wrong. Character education is very comprehensive through various approaches in teaching. The most important for character education is excellent habituation and not merely based on *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral behaving*. Thus, learners will be aware of and will not be misled (Gunawan, 2014: 2).

Character education's meaning is beyond moral education. It does not only deal with right or wrong but how to instil good values in life so that learners will be aware, understand, care, and committed to applying the daily life policies. Thus, it could be said that characters are natural attributes of individuals to respond to any situation morally. They are realized into actual action through honesty, responsibility, good deed, respect, and other values.

Cultural-based character education is an activity to create civics-practice school environment and climate (Character Education Empowerment), to engage with the classrooms, to involve the whole systems, structures, and educational executors at schools. School character education implementation focuses on habituation and cultural empowerment that represent the main and prioritized characters of an educational unit. This integrated habituation at schools was

reflected through the conducive school atmosphere and environment (Kemendikbud, 2017: 35).

### **School Culture Establishment Strategy to Support Character Education in Islamic Junior High School (MTs)**

MTs Miftahul Huda Brakas is an Islamic-based school located at Godong-Karanganyar highway. Many school programs were offered to develop their learners' characters. In the morning, the learners had been standing up in line on the school's field. They read the *Asmaul Husna* together before having *Salah Dhuha* in the congregation. In the midday, they had congregation *Salah Dhuhur* led by their teacher. Through these regular programs, the learners were expected to have excellent discipline and responsibilities. There would be sanctions when they breached the applied regulations, such as reprimand and charging with a point. It is done repeatedly as stated by Megawangi, Ratna in (Kesuma dkk, 2012:5), Samani (2012:41), Davis (2013), and Dewey in (Patten 2015). They state that the instilled character education continuously would become habits for them.

Similarly, MTs Nurul Huda Dempet, an Islamic based school, also instilled an Islamic education. Concerning the Islamic-based culture school development, the teachers composed lesson plans with character education contents. It was seen when the teachers greeted the learners before starting the class. Character education at the school was also developed through the applied curriculum. Besides teachers, the Principal's roles were also crucial to develop a school culture for the sake of learners' character building. The character education in the school could be seen from its Islamic-based extracurricular such as *Tahfidz*, *Qiro'ah*, and reciting *Al-Qur'an* activities. The extracurriculars were held every Wednesday morning before starting the class, from 06.50 until 09.00. Then, it was continued by regular learning sessions.

Concerning the applied character building, through school cultures, every staff, teacher, and employee had to participate and support the

programs. Every teacher had lesson plans containing character educations. The lesson plan content made by every teacher consisted of discipline, honesty, and responsibility. Marzuki (2012), Tri Setyo Mardiyah (2013), Suwandayani, Beti Istanti, Sa'dun Akbar, Fatah Hanurawan (2016), Suyanti (2017), R. Suharjo (2017), and Yulia Citra (2020) found that character education that stated in lesson plan should be done by teachers while being in teaching-learning process.

MTs Miftahul Huda Brakas dan MTs Nurul Huda Dempet, MTs Nurul Huda Kramat also applied Islamic culture education for each lesson. The teachers had great roles in establishing the learners' characters. Therefore, the school teachers should master what Classroom Action Research was and know every learner's characters. To realize the character education, MTs Nurul Huda Kramat had several religious-based superior programs such as learners had to be capable of reciting *Al-Qur'an*. One of them was held at the beginning of schooling time, 06.50 in the morning. The learners prayed together and read *Asmauh Husna* every day, and *Tahlil* on Thursdays led by one of the learners.

The finding was in line with habitus and arena theory proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. It states that the habitus concept is as a sociological and philosophical analysis of human behaviours. Bourdieu (in Tuner, 2012: 134) states that habitus is perceived as a system established from similar dispositions that are relatively permanent. They are integrated into past-experiences that could function as matrices, consisting of perceptions, judgments, and actions that might allow tasks completed. Due to these analogical transfers, the possible scheme allowed them to obtain solutions for similar problems. Habitus is obtained as the cause of social status position length so that the individual tends to have similar habits.

### **Character Education Implementation through Islamic School Cultures in Dempet District**

Character education in each school is important. Many children commit criminality since they are lack of proper characters. The main

character of education should be instilled at an early childhood age. However, the facts do not seem so because many parents ignore them. Schools become places to learn and at the present days to build learners' characters.

The character education implementation in MTs Mifda Brakas was done through various ways such as Islamic-religious based character education instillment. In the morning, before passing the school gate, the learners were greeted by the teachers who were standing there. The learners shook their hands and kissed the teachers' hands before passing the gate. After they got inside the school environment, they stood in line on the school field. They read *Asmauh Husna* together. This activity was done to get Allah's blessing while joining the class. Then, both teachers and the learners did *Dhuha Salah* in the congregation. Before going to the class, the learners had to recite Al-Qur'an while waiting for the teachers to come inside. Each class had to finish reading Al-Qur'an in a month. Therefore, the learners divided their tasks to recite Al-Qur'an in the classroom. In addition to reciting Al-Qur'an, learners had to memorize short verses of Al-Qur'an. Then, they came to see the home class teacher spell out their memorizations. Wahono, Margi, AT Sugeng Priyanto (2017) and Mohamad Mujibur Rohman, Dewi Liesnor, Wasino (2012), Buchory, Tulus Budi Swadayani (2014) and Sani Insan Muhamadi (2017) found that principals, teachers, and staffs in different schools become examples for learners. It has a purpose to promote proper character education.

The school also had other strategies to build the learners' characters through extracurricular. They were such as scouting, marching band, and karate. Learners were taught to cooperate in groups, to respect others, and to avoid selfishness during having scouting. Marching band, as an extracurricular, taught them to cooperate to create a beautiful and joyful melody. On the other hand, karate trained the learners to have sportive and fair personalities.

MTs Nurul Huda Dempet also had specific strategies to build the learners. A similar thing was

also done by MTs Miftahul Huda Brakas. The school instilled character education during indoor classroom and outdoor classroom learning. What differed it from other schools was its outdoor classroom-character education implementation. It was promoted every Wednesdays at 06.50 until 09.00. After joining the activity, all learners had to do *Salah Dhuha*. Then, they went to the extracurricular places such as in the classroom, in the mosque, or on the schoolyard. MTs Nurul Huda Dempet provided several extracurriculars such as (1) *Tartil Qur'an*, (2) scouting, (3) playing the tambourine, (5) karate, and (6) red-cross. Through those extracurriculars, the supervising teachers taught character education.

MTs Nurul Huda Kramat also instilled character education during the indoor classroom, outdoor classroom, or outside of learning hours. The school also obligated the learners to memorize the short verses of Al-Qur'an then spelling them out to their home class teachers. The learners were also taught to read *Tahlil* on Thursdays before getting inside to the classroom. It was led by one of the learners. During the graduation ceremony, MTs Nurul Huda also obligated the learners to memorize *Tahlil* that was witnessed by the learners' parents. The parents came to the school to witness their children, spelling out their memorization. It would be a special pride for the parents. On the other hand, for the learners, it would be a responsibility because of their memorization.

#### **Character Education Implementation Hindrances through School Cultures of the Islamic Schools**

The designed programs with the purposes to advance the school were not easy to carry out. Many hindrances should be passed while carrying out the program. It included school programs to construct learners' characters. Those three schools had similarly same hindrances to apply character education. Every learner had specific characters that were brought from their homes. There were learners with good characters and also with poor characters. Character building is initially fostered

through family learning. Then, it is entailed by the surrounding environment, such as playmates.

The engaged hindrances at schools were such as lack of parental attention, technology addiction, and peer friends. Indeed, every learner had his smartphone that could negatively impact him if it was not wisely used. Learners who brought their phones at schools would play truant because they could easily interact with people outside of schools. Thus, they could easily create agreement outside of schools.

Current uncontrolled-era intercommunication degrades morality. This is the greatest hindrance for educators to foster learners' characters. In addition to it, lack of parental attention makes children uncontrolled. Family background also has great influence to learners' character developments. Due to those hindrances, teachers had to promote a personal approach to the learners. Many parents thought that when they brought their children to school, they would transfer their responsibilities to the school. Unfortunately, this perception is wrong. Parents should cooperate with the schools to educate their children.

Other engaged hindrances were lack of school facilities. Several schools had not security facility for their learners to make the discipline, for example, no gates that allowed learners to get inside and outside freely. It was not easy to monitor and had a high possibility to allow learners playing truant. Although there had been teachers to monitor, when the teachers had to teach in the classroom, several learners could sneak out without being noticed.

## CONCLUSION

Character education empowerment through school cultures in Islamic schools in Dempet district was similar one to another. MTs Miftahul Huda Brakas and MTs Nurul Huda Dempet habituated their learners to do *Dhuha Salah* and read *Asmaul Husna* every morning before starting the lesson. Although MTs Nurul Huda Kramat did not do so, every morning before starting the class,

the school required the learners to read *Asmaul Husna* in each classroom. On Thursdays morning, the school required them to read *Tahlil* together in front of the class. The school also instilled character education outside of learning hours, during extracurricular activities. Those designed programs were structured so that the implementations were applicable. Every teacher was also cooperative and supported the programs.

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