Integration of Character Education into the Management of Independent Curriculum-Based Learning in Elementary Schools

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Abstract: Integration of character education through the management of Independent Curriculum-based learning in schools is an important learning pattern to be implemented, especially in Elementary Schools as the initial phase of critical individual development. This research was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan. The method used is a qualitative method. Data collection tools use interview methods, documentation, observation and literature review. Data analysis uses descriptive qualitative analysis. The results of the study state that the integration of character education into the management of Independent Curriculum-based learning is carried out with learning planning designed through ATP and character education-based teaching modules. The implementation of learning focuses on the implementation of holistic learning, namely increasing achievement in line with student character development. Learning assessment uses a holistic approach that emphasizes the evaluation of academic achievement by viewing individual differences as part of the characteristics of each student.

Keywords: Character Education, Learning Management, Independent Curriculum

A. Introduction

Elementary School is the initial phase of critical individual development (Mustoip, 2023). Therefore, education must be able to develop students' potential as individuals so that they can live a complete and quality life by organizing educational programs for the development of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills (Akhmadi, 2023). Educational patterns that lead to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development are closely related to the formation of student character where students have academic abilities but also form a person's personality through character education (Gunawan, 2012). So, education without character will only make individuals grow partially, become intelligent and clever figures, but lack a sense of humanity (Kusdani, 2021).

To realize this, the ability of educators is needed in managing learning that can be integrated with character education, because character education is a necessity to be developed in schools (Gabriel, 2022). Management of learning based on character

education in schools is an effort to form strong character from an early age. Especially in Elementary School, which is the initial level of education in formal education, where children begin to form their values, attitudes, and behaviors. Through character-based learning management, students can develop a strong foundation for positive character, morals, and ethics that will help them in their daily lives and the future.

In its implementation, the Merdeka curriculum seeks to maximize the educational process towards the development of human potential and competence, so that they become humans who are useful for the nation and state (Akhmadi, 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum is a new approach to curriculum development by giving teachers the freedom to develop and implement a curriculum that is in accordance with the needs and potential of students (Purba & Bermuli, 2022), characteristics, culture, and school environment, student needs that integrate local values, local wisdom, and student potential (Prihatini et al., 2022).

The Merdeka Curriculum also emphasizes the development of students' life skills which include critical thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, communication, and problem solving. Learning is directed to develop the competence and potential of students holistically. Therefore, the integration of character education in the learning management system is one form of implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in educational units. The integration of character education into learning management at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan has been implemented for a long time, which was then supported by the change in the 2023 curriculum to the Merdeka curriculum, the content of which is more accommodating to its implementation in every learning activity at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan, which not only can get academic lessons but also in every learning activity student can grow character values in their personalities. As the results of research from (Muslimin, 2023) which states that internalization of character values into the daily behavior of students can be done through the learning process, both inside and outside the classroom. Basically, learning activities, in addition to making students master the targeted competencies, are also designed to make students know, realize, care, and have good character.

Integration of character education in the learning process at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan is carried out by providing flexibility to teachers in adapting the curriculum according to developments and changes in the times, educational units can adjust to remain relevant to the demands and needs of students and advances in science and technology. In its implementation, character education is also carried out by collaborating between teachers, schools, parents, and the community to commit to developing education according to the vision and mission of the educational unit so that students of SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan can obtain contextual learning, which links learning with the real lives of students who can shape student character. In addition, character formation is also carried out by providing an active role to students in the learning process by encouraging student participation in the implementation of learning, instilling student independence and responsibility, and providing space for

students to develop interests, talents, and potential. Teachers of SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan also encourage a project-based learning approach, where students are involved in real projects that allow them to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned. These projects can focus on social, environmental, cultural, or local issues that are relevant to students, while placing the importance of character education as a component in the learning process. The implementation of character education-based learning at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan is carried out in every school activity with the aim of building character through a habituation approach. Other character education activities are by instilling obedience and responsibility in students in carrying out school regulations, as well as maintaining cleanliness as an effort by the school to integrate character education into learning activities at school.

Independent Curriculum

Curriculum is a plan that provides guidelines or guidelines in the teaching and learning process (Sukmadinata, 2013). There is another definition that states that curriculum is seen as a plan that is prepared to facilitate the teaching and learning process under the guidance and responsibility of schools or educational institutions and their teaching staff (Syafaruddin & Nasution, 2011). There are three concepts of curriculum, curriculum as substance, as a system, as a field of study. Curriculum as substance, is a document that contains formulations about objectives, teaching materials, teaching and learning activities, schedules and evaluations. Curriculum as a system, includes personnel structure, and work procedures on how to prepare a curriculum, implement, evaluate, and perfect it. Curriculum as a field of study, namely the field of curriculum study (Nurwiatin, 2022).

While the independent curriculum is a replacement for the KTSP curriculum, which details several aspects clearly, namely knowledge, skills, and social and spiritual attitudes (Setiawan, 2019). The independent curriculum was created in line with the decline in the character of the Indonesian nation in recent times. Corruption, drug abuse, murder, violence, thuggery, and others are incidents that indicate the low quality of education and human resources and the fragility of the moral and spiritual foundations of the nation's life. The purpose of developing the independent curriculum is to prepare Indonesian people to have the ability to live as individuals and citizens who are faithful, productive, creative, innovative, and affective and are able to contribute to the life of society, nation, state, and world civilization. The independent curriculum was developed from the 2006 curriculum (KTSP) which is based on thoughts about future challenges, public perception, developments in knowledge and pedagogy, future competencies, and negative phenomena that have emerged.

Thus, it can be stated that the independent curriculum is a development of the previous curriculum that emphasizes not only the mastery of student competencies, but also character formation. In accordance with the core competencies (KI)

determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture, KI 1 and KI 2 are related to the objectives of forming student character while KI 3 and KI 4 are related to the mastery of student competencies.

Integration of Character Education into Learning Management

Management is the process of planning, organizing, directing, and supervising the efforts of members of the organization and users of organizational resources in order to achieve the stated organizational goals (Stooner et al, 1996). According to (Terry, 2014) the management function is divided into four parts, namely planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling.

Thus, management is the process of planning, organizing, directing, and supervising in an organization in order to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently. Through these functions, managers optimize the use of resources, combine them into one and convert them into output. By implementing these management functions, managers can optimize the use of resources and coordinate the implementation of tasks to achieve goals.

Learning management is concerned with understanding, improving and implementing the management of the teaching program being implemented. According to (Hoban, G. J., & Sersland, 1999), learning management is more inclined towards everything that teachers do, starting from before learning, when learning is taking place, and after the lesson is finished. All of these aspects will be used as evaluation material for future learning. In learning management, the point is managing effective learning. For this reason, it is necessary to optimize the function of the learning management components to achieve effective school quality and the success of the learning process (Syafaruddin & Nasution, 2011).

Thus, the integration of character education into learning management is the integration of character values contained in the curriculum into the planning, implementation, and assessment of learning which aims for the learning process to run effectively to improve academic abilities and character formation of students.

B. Methods

This research was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan using a descriptive qualitative approach. The key person informants were the principal, teachers and students of SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan, Banyuasin Regency. Data collection techniques used interview, observation and documentation techniques. Data analysis used qualitative data analysis with the stages carried out in the study referring to the theory (Miles and Hubarman, 2013), namely data collection, data reduction. data presentation and drawing conclusions and verification of findings.

C. Results and Discussion

Learning Planning at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penguan

In the planning process, SD Negeri 2 Selat Penguan Teachers used a communication and observation approach in understanding student characteristics. Teachers observed student characters during learning activities or during the learning process. This states that teachers do not see children as objects of education alone, but they are involved in participating in the learning process. Therefore, teachers of SD Negeri 2 Selat Penguan do not design learning that only touches on cognitive aspects, but also design aspects of skills and attitudes as an implementation of character education. Learning planning carried out by teachers of SD Negeri 2 Selat Penguan through ATP activities and Teaching Modules includes identifying basic competencies that will be taught to students, adjusting learning plans to meet students' needs, interests, and abilities, developing clear and measurable learning objectives that reflect the basic competencies to be achieved by students. Learning planning through ATP activities and teaching modules that are integrated with character education aims for students to develop holistically including academic abilities, moral understanding, empathy, and social skills. Through learning planning that is integrated with character education, teachers of SD Negeri 2 Selat Penguan also identify basic competencies that will be taught to students and adjust learning plans to meet students' needs, interests, and abilities and choose learning strategies that are in accordance with the basic competencies taught to students. In addition, teachers of SD Negeri 2 Selat Penguan develop clear and measurable learning objectives that reflect the basic competencies to be achieved by students by considering student diversity in learning planning.

Implementation of Learning at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penguan

In its implementation, teachers at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penguan adopted a holistic approach in integrating academic learning with character building where the implementation of instilling character values into the learning and assessment process has become the foundation for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Therefore, in its implementation, teachers at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penguan strive to ensure that the implementation of learning views that the formation of student character is an element that cannot be separated from efforts to improve academic achievement. Thus, this study found that in the implementation of learning that is integrated with character education such as the character values of cooperation, ethics, and responsibility are not only emphasized through special subjects, but are also integrated into various aspects of the implementation of learning that create a learning environment characterized by personal development and positive character of students.

Evaluation of Learning at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan

At the evaluation stage, teachers at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan use a holistic assessment approach. In this approach, the assessment is not only focused on academic achievement alone, but also considers the overall personal development of students. As stated by (Wikansari et al., 2023) that the Independent Curriculum invites students to be seen as individuals with broader development dimensions, beyond academic limitations. In this context, assessment plays a role as a tool to understand students' personal progress in various aspects, including character development and positive attitudes. Thus, a holistic assessment approach is implemented by measuring academic knowledge and skills as well as students' social, emotional, and moral development. As stated by (Lina et al., 2022) this holistic assessment approach seeks to appreciate the diversity of individual development, by accommodating non-academic aspects that contribute to the formation of students' character and personality as a whole. In practice, this approach reflects the concept of contextual and holistic learning in the Independent Curriculum which focuses on balanced personal development.

Problems of Integrating Character Education into Learning Management at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan

The problems faced by teachers in managing character-based learning include limited facilities and infrastructure. Teachers often face obstacles in integrating character education into the learning process due to limited facilities and infrastructure, especially limited learning media. In implementing a broad curriculum and meeting academic demands, limited learning facilities are a significant obstacle in developing and integrating character-based learning as a whole. In addition, the lack of teacher training and resources has a significant impact on teachers' efforts in managing character-based learning. Another obstacle is that differences in student characteristics are a factor that makes it difficult for teachers to make assessments so that they are not subjective in quantitative measurements. This can be a challenge for teachers in conducting evaluations and viewing individual differences as part of the characteristics of each student.

Solutions to Dealing with Problems of Integrating Character Education into the Learning Process at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan

The solution taken to overcome obstacles is to carry out training and professional development. Teachers need to get adequate training and professional development in the field of character-based learning. This training can provide a better understanding of the concepts, strategies, and best practices in developing student character. In overcoming the constraints of assessment subjectivity, teachers can use a holistic assessment approach. In addition to using traditional academic assessments, teachers can use a holistic assessment approach to measure student character

development. This can involve observational assessment, portfolio assessment, reflection, or evaluation of student participation in character activities. The last is the fulfillment of learning facilities and infrastructure that can support the integration of character values into learning management. It is important for schools to provide learning facilities that support character-based learning so that the teaching and learning process can effectively integrate character into school policies and daily practices.

Based on the research results, it can be stated that character education-based learning management at SD Negeri 2 Selat Penuguan consists of 3 stages, namely (1) learning planning which is carried out by compiling character education-based teaching modules; (2) implementation of holistic learning; 3) evaluation of learning based on holistic assessment. Character education-based learning management in elementary schools is an approach designed to integrate character development and moral values with the learning process in the elementary school environment. The main goal is to form students who are not only academically intelligent, but also have good attitudes, values, and ethics.

This is in accordance with the statement (Mustoip, 2023) that character education in the Independent Curriculum has a holistic approach, where character values are not only taught through special lessons, but also applied in students' daily lives. Then the opinion that in the Independent Curriculum, character education is integrated into all aspects of school life, including extracurricular activities, social activities, and interactions between students and teachers. This is in line with research (Nurasiah et al., 2022) which found that students involved in character education through the Independent Curriculum showed an increase in moral understanding, empathy, and social skills. This study shows that character education integrated into the Independent Curriculum can contribute to the holistic development of students.

Management of character education-based learning that demonstrates desired moral values through daily actions, such as showing honesty, tolerance, and respect for students and colleagues through providing direction, teaching, and guidance aimed at developing students' character both directly and indirectly has an impact on improving student achievement in school. Students involved in character education through the Independent Curriculum have better attendance rates, higher levels of concentration, and improvements in academic test results. This shows that character education in the Independent Curriculum can provide benefits that go beyond moral and social aspects, but also contribute to students' academic achievement.

The implementation of character education-based learning management in elementary schools can help create a comprehensive learning environment, which not only develops students' academic intelligence but also strengthens character, morals, and good values from an early age. This aims to form a young generation that is responsible, ethical, and has a positive attitude in everyday life. As stated by

(Nurdiana Sari et al., 2023) that students must receive character education from an early age. Character education is taught to children because it is the first step to becoming a human being who is rational, intelligent, and emotionally intelligent in addition to being academically intelligent. In addition, character education in the Merdeka Curriculum can also help students develop positive attitudes towards themselves and others. Through direct experience and daily social interactions, students can learn about values such as cooperation, honesty, and concern for others. In the long run, this can help students become better individuals and contribute positively to society. Thus, this study confirms that character education is not a separate component, but rather an integral part of the Independent Curriculum which emphasizes the importance of character formation in a holistic and comprehensive learning context (Mustoip, 2023). The results of this study are supported by research from (Muslimin, 2023) which states that the integration of character values into each subject aims to introduce character education values in each subject so that students realize the importance of these character values. Then (Widaningsih & Hery Herrnawam, 2023) which states that character education has encouraged students to be able to reason critically, creatively, globally diverse, and collaboratively.

D. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the integration of character education into the management of learning based on the Independent Curriculum is carried out with learning planning designed through ATP and character education-based teaching modules. The implementation of learning focuses on the implementation of holistic learning, namely increasing achievement in line with student character development. Learning assessment uses a holistic approach that emphasizes the evaluation of academic achievement by viewing individual differences as part of the characteristics of each student. Based on the conclusions of the research results, the suggestions that can be put forward to teachers are to strive to improve their competence and maximize their competence to implement character education into the teaching and learning process at school. Then to the principal so that they can develop an effective character-based curriculum for students and can manage character-based learning according to the social conditions of the community.

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