Developing Strong Moral Values: Integrating Value and Character Education in Educational Context

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ABSTRACT

Morality and character are fundamental pillars in the development of individuals with integrity and harmonious societies. This article aims to explore the concept of integrating value and character education in the educational context, delve into its benefits, and highlight the challenges that may arise in its implementation. The reference sources examined and analyzed by the author are obtained from various sources, including reference books and other studies published in both national and international journals. The examination is limited to the significance of integrating value and character education in the educational context, exploring its impact, identifying potential challenges in its implementation journey, and understanding why and how this integration can serve as a strong foundation for building an ethical and moral society. In the educational context, the integration of value and character education has a profound impact on the moral and character development of students. Despite facing challenges, the benefits are far greater, shaping individuals who are not only intelligent but also moral and ethical.

Keywords: Morality, Value and Character Education Integration, Moral and Character Development

INTRODUCTION

Morality and character are fundamental pillars in the development of individuals with integrity and harmonious societies. In the realm of education, an inseparable goal of the learning process is not only to cultivate intellectual intelligence but also to shape strong morals and ethics. Value and character education is not just an addition to the curriculum; it is a necessity that plays a vital role in shaping the responsible, empathetic, and ethical generations of the future. This article aims to explore the concept of integrating value and character education in the educational context, delve into its benefits, and highlight the challenges that may arise in its implementation.

A holistic educational approach combines character development with the values inherent within it (King Jr., 1947). Teaching values and character is not a separate effort from the learning process; it is an approach that spans subjects, linking academic experiences with the application of values in real life. In a complex global era where information is easily accessible and values are continually evolving, value and character education becomes increasingly crucial. Through the integration of values and character, education can assist learners in understanding the distinction between right and wrong, cultivating a critical attitude towards morality, and fostering the ability to make ethical decisions. Character education is a form of long-term investment that influences individual development in various aspects of life (Fullan, 2001).

However, the process of integrating value and character education does not come without challenges. The lack of a clear framework, diverse understandings of the values that should be instilled, and the challenges of assessing character development are some factors that require attention. Thoughtful planning and support from the entire school community are essential factors in the success of integrating value and character education (Berkowitz and Bier, 2005). The implementation of character-based education must involve all educational components, starting from government policy-makers in the national education system, school

principals in management, competent teachers, facilities, curriculum, and community support (Rahman & Wassalwa, 2019).

Creating a future generation with strong morals and excellent character requires genuine efforts, namely by integrating value and character education into the curriculum and educational practices. Thus, this article aims to provide profound insights into the significance of integrating value and character education in the educational context, exploring its impact, identifying potential challenges along the journey, and explaining why and how this integration can serve as a strong foundation in building an ethical and moral society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Moral and Character Development

The theory of moral and character development serves as a crucial foundation for understanding how individuals form their perspectives on right and wrong, as well as how they shape their personal character and ethics. One of the most renowned theories that has significantly influenced research and education in this domain is Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development. One diligently strives to formulate moral values and principles that hold validity and applicability independently from the influence of the group of individuals holding them and apart from the individual's identification with that group (Kohlberg, 1981). Kohlberg developed his theory based on Jean Piaget's framework of cognitive development. Kohlberg's theory identifies six stages of moral development grouped into three levels: Pre-conventional, Conventional, and Post-conventional. Each stage depicts how individuals think about morality and ethics.

During the Pre-conventional stage, individuals tend to view morality from a self-centered perspective and consider physical consequences. For example, in Stage 1, individuals are likely to obey authorities to avoid punishment. In Stage 2, they may engage in actions that benefit themselves. Subsequently, in the Conventional level, individuals begin to consider social norms and societal expectations. In Stage 3, they might strive to meet the expectations of others and maintain good relationships. In Stage 4, individuals tend to respect the laws and authority of society.

The final stage is the Post-conventional level, where individuals contemplate broader moral principles and universal values. In Stage 5, they are inclined to understand diverse perspectives and seek social consensus. In Stage 6, individuals may adopt universal moral principles that prioritize human rights and universal ethics.

Integration Approach of Values and Character in the Curriculum

Integrating values and character into the curriculum is an educational approach aimed at shaping students not only in academic aspects but also in moral values, ethics, and strong character. Its primary goal is to help students become individuals who are responsible, ethical, and have integrity in their daily lives (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). This approach integrates the teaching of values and character across all subjects and school activities, ensuring that these values are not only taught explicitly but also reflected in everyday learning experiences.

This approach emphasizes that education is not just about understanding academic concepts but also about shaping students' character and morals to guide them through various life situations. Character education assists students in developing moral identity and cultivating virtues such as justice, respect, compassion, trustworthiness, responsibility, and citizenship (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). By integrating values and character into the curriculum, schools create an environment that supports the formation of empathetic individuals with a positive attitude, capable of addressing moral challenges. An example of integrating values and character into the curriculum is linking moral concepts to literature or history being taught. For instance, when reading inspirational stories about individuals with strong personalities, students can learn about values such as perseverance, hard work, or honesty. How an individual responds to situations in their environment depends on various factors, including the values they believe in due to influences they have

encountered earlier (Hermawan and Rukandi, 2005). Furthermore, discussing moral dilemmas in social studies or science lessons can help students understand and practice ethical principles in their daily lives.

Benefits of Values and Character Education

The rapid development of technology and information has brought an impact on education to shape students who possess not only intellectual intelligence but also a solid foundation of morals and character. Education is no longer solely about filling students' minds with facts and knowledge, but also about shaping their hearts and attitudes towards the world. Values and character education has emerged as a response to this need.

Values and character education carries significant benefits in shaping individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess strong personalities, good ethics, and integrity in their actions. Here are some important benefits of values and character education:

Strong Moral Development: Values and character education helps students develop a deep understanding of right and wrong, strengthening their moral foundation. This aids them in making appropriate decisions in various life situations. Character education helps shape positive attitudes and values within individuals, influencing their behavior in the future (Pratiwi, 2023). Character education provides students with a compass to make decisions that not only benefit themselves but also contribute positively to the broader community (Lickona, 1991).

1. Enhanced Leadership: Values and character education cultivates strong leadership qualities within students. They learn to set a positive example for others and lead with integrity, inspiring and motivating those around them.
2. Development of Empathy and Social Concern: Students who receive values and character education tend to have higher levels of empathy towards the feelings and needs of others. They learn to appreciate diversity and possess a sense of care for social well-being.
3. Strengthened Resilience: Values and character education helps students build mental and emotional resilience. They learn to overcome challenges with integrity and courageously face obstacles that may arise along the way.
4. Inculcation of Responsibility: Students learn to take responsibility for their actions and their impact on themselves, others, and the environment. They understand the importance of fulfilling their obligations.
5. Improved Interpersonal Relationships: Values and character education assists students in building healthy and respectful relationships with others. This creates a positive social environment both in school and daily life.
6. Preparation for Successful Future: Students with strong character have a solid foundation for achieving success in their careers and personal lives. They are known as reliable, honest, and quality individuals.

These benefits highlight the profound impact of values and character education in nurturing well-rounded individuals who not only excel academically but also contribute positively to society.

METHOD

In this research entitled "Developing Strong Morality: Integrating Values and Character Education in the Context of Education," the methodological approach employed is the literature review method. The reference sources studied and analyzed by the author are obtained from various sources, including reference books and other research articles published in journals, both at the national and international levels. The review is focused on the significance of integrating values and character education in the context of education, exploring its impacts, identifying potential challenges that may arise during its implementation,

and understanding why and how this integration can form a strong foundation in building an ethical and moral society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The integration of values and character education brings significant benefits in shaping students' morality and personality. This education helps students develop a profound understanding of ethical values, honesty, responsibility, and empathy. In implementing this approach to learning, students not only sharpen their academic skills but also cultivate essential qualities for facing the real world. The development of strong morals can be achieved by integrating values education and character education within the educational framework. The implementation of character education is best carried out in an integrated and internalized manner throughout the school environment (Rofi'ie, 2019). One way to achieve this integration is through the teaching process, particularly in subjects such as Civic Education (PKn).

Integration of Character Education in Civic Education Learning can be a solution to restore the important role of Civic Education in promoting key virtues such as responsibility, honesty, integrity, and others (Pratiwi, 2023). Character education provided to students is an effort to shape a positive personality in facing the continuous challenges and changes in their social environment (Sinaga, 2021). The positive impact of integrating values and character education is not limited to individual development but also extends to society as a whole.

Values and character education shapes a generation that possesses a high sense of social responsibility and empathy towards others. Through this approach, we can create a better social environment where individuals are aware of their contributions to society and the world. However, integrating values and character education in the context of education also faces certain challenges. The primary challenge is the development of an effective curriculum and relevant teaching materials. Additionally, educators need to possess a deep understanding of the values and character they aim to teach, as well as the ability to harmoniously integrate them with the learning content. Resources and support from administrative bodies are also crucial to support the comprehensive implementation of values and character education. This reflects the urgency of preparing for the future through education. Likewise, the challenge of developing an effective curriculum and relevant teaching approaches requires dedication to prepare future generations with strong moral and character qualities. Preparing for tomorrow is our responsibility today, and values and character education is one way to prepare for a better future (Malcolm, 1992).

One example of integrating values and character education in the context of education is the cultivation of character education through habituation and local content by SDN Pulorejo 01, Kec. Winong, Kab. Pati (Rusmi, 2021). This school has successfully faced the challenges of the times, where foreign cultures easily infiltrate and can influence Indonesian culture. This, of course, has a significant impact on values, cultural systems, as well as the attitudes and behaviors of individuals in societal, national, and state life. One of the causes of the less-than-optimal formation of students' characters is the rapid adoption of foreign cultures by students without prior filtering. Intelligent students can create various problems if they have poor personalities.

Starting from this issue, the school has implemented character education through habituation. Additionally, the school curriculum includes the implementation of character education integrated into local subject matter. Local content is one of the curricular activities aimed at developing competencies tailored to local wisdom. By applying character education that emphasizes ethics and etiquette, students, teachers, staff, and the community at SDN Pulorejo 01 become accustomed to their own cultural heritage. They begin by respecting and preserving their local culture as a starting point to support the preservation of national culture. Students gain a better understanding of various aspects of Javanese cultural heritage, including social norms, good behavior, and various practices that can be used as a means to cultivate character education.

CONCLUSION

In the context of education, the integration of values and character education has a profound impact on the moral and character development of students. Despite facing challenges, its benefits are far greater, shaping individuals who are not only intelligent but also morally and ethically sound. Values and character education is not merely a classroom subject but an investment in building morality and personality that will shape a better society in the future.

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