



The Integration of Character Values in the Equivalency Education Program at Ash-Shodiq Community Learning Center Lembang

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ABSTRACT

The equal education program is designed to expand access to educational services for the community in order to improve the quality of human resources with character. PKBM Ash-Shoddiq as a provider of equal education that grows from, by and for the community contributes to producing graduates with character. The aim of this research is to describe data regarding the application of character values in the equality education program at PKBM Ash-Shoddiq. The theoretical study used is the concept of character education and equality education programs. The research approach used is a qualitative approach with a case method. Data collection techniques were carried out through interviews, literature study, documentation and observation. The research subjects were managers, tutors, learning residents and the foundation's board of trustees. The research results show that the application of character values in the equality education program is carried out in an integrated and holistic manner that combines character values and life skills education. The character values that are built are politeness, healthy lifestyle, independence, usefulness, having work and filial piety, where in the holistic-integration approach, the tutor's competence in developing the character and life skills of students is not separated from their competence in teaching academic subjects. On the contrary, both are considered an integral part of the tutor's responsibility in forming individuals with integrity and potential. The researcher concluded that this approach recognizes the importance of developing the character of students in a balanced manner with the mastery of academic knowledge and life skills.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 15 Jan 2024

First Revised 26 Jan 2024

Accepted 18 Mar 2024

First Available Online 30 Mar 2024

Publication Date 01 April 2024

Keyword:

Character Values, Equality Education, PKBM.

1. INTRODUCTION

Referring to the data released by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2020, Indonesia's index is at 0.718, ranking 107th out of 189 countries globally. In the Southeast Asian region, Indonesia's Human Development Index (HDI) is still below that of Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, and Thailand (UNDP, 2022). Meanwhile, data released by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2021 indicates that Indonesia's Human Development Index (HDI) for the year 2021 reached 72.29, showing an increase of 0.35 points (0.49 percent) compared to the previous year's achievement (71.94). In 2023, Indonesia's HDI score reached 74.39, showing a continuous improvement compared to previous years. This index measures the quality of development based on data that depicts human life quality, including life expectancy, literacy rates, average years of schooling, and the community's purchasing power. The HDI reflects the outcomes of the human development process based on three fundamental indicators of human capabilities: health status, educational quality, and access to economic resources in terms of equalizing the purchasing power of the population (Lie et al., 2022). As reported by CNBC Indonesia news portal (Nugroho, 2023), the Human Development Index in Papua lags by 20.54 points compared to the index of Jakarta. From this, it can be concluded that the Human Development Index in Indonesia is still uneven despite significant improvements each year.

Based on the above data, the current condition of Indonesian society can be characterized as having low-quality human resources. Therefore, various efforts need to be undertaken to improve the quality of the nation's Human Resources (HR), including the crucial role of education in expanding educational opportunities for the public while maintaining the quality of education itself. The government has been striving to enhance the Human Development Index through policies in the education sector, as mentioned in the "Berita Satu" news portal, which reveals that the government encourages public participation in the 12-year compulsory education program (Febrianna, 2023).

Education has an important role in improving human resources (Jarvis, 2020; Piwowar-Sulej 2021), stating that the development of human resource quality is a facilitation process to enable individuals to optimize their potential and productivity in both personal and environmental aspects. An example of the influence of human resource quality development is the improved financial condition of an individual (Guijarro-Garvi et al., 2022). Additionally, education has an impact on public health conditions through knowledge about health, employment, income, and social and psychological factors (Guijarro-Garvi et al., 2022). Imelda, Balafif, and Wahyuni's research in 2021 revealed that education is one of the factors partially influencing the Human Development Index (HDI) in Sidoarjo Regency from 1998 to 2017. Therefore, it can be concluded that education is the foundation for improving the overall societal living conditions. According to the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, the purpose of education is to develop the potential of learners to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to the Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and responsible citizens. To achieve this goal, Article 13, paragraph 1, states that the education system consists of formal, non-formal, and informal education pathways that complement and enrich each other (2004: 23). Referring to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 4 emphasizes ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities. Therefore, education becomes beneficial for the nation when its implementation process benefits learners, educators, society, and the country (Gaol, 2023). Learning is a crucial process as it ensures the continuity and life of society (Elihami in Hafidz et al., 2021).

In efforts to achieve these goals, the management of existing non-formal education units becomes crucial in strengthening human resources. Non-formal education essentially shares the same responsibility as formal education in educating the nation, making the country accountable for formal education regulations (Thoif, 2021). Research by Muslim & Suci (2020) found that non-formal education, especially community-based education, contributes to improving the quality of human resources as it teaches communities about local issues and is directly organized by the community itself with government guidance and supervision.

Community education, now legally known as non-formal education, is defined as any organized educational activity outside the formal education system, whether conducted separately or as an integral part of a larger activity, intentionally performed to serve specific learners to achieve their learning goals. Coombs' (1973) definition emphasizes the broad nature of the non-formal education system, which can be organized separately from the school education system or be part of the school education system to provide optimal services to learners for better quality and character. In line with Coombs' definition, Ramatni (2023) argues that most non-formal education institutions are flexible, adaptive, and tailored to the specific needs of the community.

In Mishra & Misra (2022), it is mentioned that non-formal education significantly contributes to enhancing literacy skills and sustaining individuals in society, even though in developing countries, non-formal education is influenced by population density, geographical diversity, and various social and economic conditions. Research conducted by Shomedran & Nengsih (2022) proves that Learning Activity Centers (Sanggar Kegiatan Belajar - SKB), as a unit of non-formal education, also contribute to building the quality of human resources. This contribution can be observed through educational programs, training, skills development, and community empowerment. The improvement in the quality of human resources through non-formal education programs is more impactful when supported by the government, local communities, competent educators, and adequate educational infrastructure, as well as collaboration with partner institutions (Shomedran & Nengsih, 2022).

One of the non-formal education units established to encourage the enhancement of high-quality, character-rich human resources is the Community Learning Center, abbreviated as PKBM (Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat). The PKBM, as a non-formal education unit in Indonesia, plays a significant role in the education of the community and serves as a government partner in enlightening society through various non-formal education programs. These programs are expected to foster a learning society, ultimately enhancing independence, empowerment in education, and innovation in seeking new information to improve lives. This non-formal education institution is born from, by, and for the community, striving to address various learning needs to build empowered, independent, and characterful learners in accordance with local wisdom. Efforts to produce PKBM graduates with strong character are undertaken through equivalence education programs, offering Package A equivalent to elementary school, Package B equivalent to junior high school, and Package C equivalent to senior high school. These programs emphasize knowledge mastery, functional skills, and the development of quality and character in learners' professional attitudes and personalities. In the realm of non-formal education, character education can be implemented through a holistic approach, related to learners' daily activities and work, guiding them to instill values such as social concern, patriotism, honesty, and harmony in society (Darmawan & Rosmilawati, 2021). Character education in the non-formal education process needs to be earnestly designed to ensure positive outcomes for learners (Kurniawan & Zati, 2021).

From this perspective, it is evident that character education should be integrated into non-formal education settings, including institutions like PKBM (Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat). Darmawan and Rosmilawati (2020) assert that character education practices need to be instilled by PKBM institution managers in their learners. In line with this, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (2016) provides a framework of core character values that every educational institution should reference. These values include religious commitment, which is demonstrated through faithfulness to the Almighty, cleanliness, tolerance, and environmental stewardship. Nationalism is reflected in prioritizing national interests over personal or group interests. Cooperation is shown through appreciating the spirit of teamwork and collaboratively solving problems. Integrity is characterized by the effort to be trustworthy in one's words, actions, and work. Lastly, independence is exhibited through self-reliance and the ability to stand on one's own without undue dependence on others.

The essence of education is to humanize individuals to have good morals and character, not merely adhering to the paradigm of being able to answer exam questions rather than exams for learning (learning for life). The most fatal failure of education is when the educated product no longer has a conscience based on morality and a sense of humanity, ultimately leading to an inability to shape destiny (Agustian, 2003; Zaim, 2008). Therefore, character education becomes the key to the success of high-quality Indonesian human resources. Hence, the researcher is interested in examining the flow of character values in the non-formal education unit of PKBM.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research approach utilized in this study is a qualitative approach with a case study method. The researcher believes that this approach can provide an understanding of the specific context of the non-formal education institution, PKBM, in the flow of character values. Qualitative research is an approach oriented towards natural phenomena or phenomena (Abdussamad, 2021). Qualitative research is grounded in Max Weber's idea that the essence of sociological research emphasizes the meaning behind individual actions that drive the manifestation of social phenomena (Murdiyanto, 2020). The case study method is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the flow of character values in PKBM Ash-Shoddiq. This involves qualitative research as well as case study procedures and techniques (Dunn & Saville, 2015; Neuman, 2014; Yin, 2015). The research subjects include administrators, tutors, learners, and the foundation's board of trustees. Informants involved in this study were purposively selected, meaning they were sampled for their good understanding of the flow of character values.

Regarding the data collection techniques, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis were employed (Creswell, 2014). Participant observation was conducted by the researcher playing the role of an active observer engaged in activities at PKBM Ash-Shoddiq. In-depth interviews were conducted with tutors and learners to gain insights and understanding about the flow of character values. Document analysis was used to collect data from various documents related to the curriculum, policies, and school activities related to the flow of character values. These methods were chosen to ensure a thorough and objective analysis. Therefore, in this context, interview instruments, observation guidelines, and documentation study tools were also designed.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The description of the research findings is the result of data analysis obtained from the data collection process conducted by the researcher through participant observation, interviews, and document analysis at PKBM Ash-Shoddiq. Based on the existing findings, the researcher was able to identify several aspects related to the flow of character values implemented at PKBM Ash-Shoddiq, including preparation aspects, steps/procedures, flow strategies and methods, and institutionalization of values. For further clarification, these aspects are detailed as follows.

3.1. Preparation for the Flow of Character Values

Based on interviews with tutors, administrators, and learners, it was revealed that, firstly, the preparation for the flow of character values is carried out by the administrators through an annual program meeting held at the beginning of each semester. The agenda includes formulating and determining the competency standards/learning outcomes to be achieved by learners in the equivalence education program at levels A, B, and C. This includes assignments and the establishment of character values to be achieved by learners within the PKBM Ash-Shoddiq environment. Participants in this preparation meeting include the Foundation's Chairman and Board of Trustees, PKBM Chairman and Secretary, Foundation Supervisors, and representatives from the parents' association. Administratively, the outcomes of this preparation meeting include the formulation of competency standards to be achieved by PKBM Ash-Shoddiq learners, the type of practical character value assignments to be performed by learners, parenting agenda, and mid-semester and end-of-semester assessment schedules (academic calendar for semester 1).

3.2. Procedures

Regarding the procedures involved in the flow of character values, interviews with tutors, administrators, and learners revealed several key steps taken by PKBM. First, PKBM Ash-Shoddiq engages in the socialization of competency standards and learning outcomes to the entire academic community, including teachers, administrative staff, operators, and guards. This ensures that everyone is aware of the educational goals. Second, they prepare comprehensive learning tools, such as syllabi, curricula, lesson plans, and teaching media, to support the integration of character values. Third, facilities and infrastructure are organized to facilitate the effective implementation of these character values. The flow of character values is then managed through several means: a) establishing regulations and rules that apply to all members of the academic community; b) integrating character values into the subjects taught by educators and tutors; and c) focusing on specific values promoted by PKBM, such as courtesy, healthy lifestyles, independence, usefulness, creativity, and service. Lastly, the potential of the surrounding environment is utilized as a learning medium, tailored to the characteristics of learners or targets for each level or program.

3.3. Flow Strategies and Method

Thirdly, concerning strategies and methods for the flow of character values, based on interviews, observations, and document studies, data was obtained indicating that the approach and strategy for the flow of character values at PKBM Ash-Shoddiq are carried out through a holistic, integrative approach based on life skills education. Both approaches recognize the importance of developing the character of learners in balance with academic knowledge and life skills. In the holistic approach, tutors' competence in developing character

and life skills of learners is not separated from their competence in teaching academic subjects. Instead, both are considered integral parts of the teacher's responsibility in shaping individuals with integrity and potential.

3.4. Institutionalization of Values

Fourthly, regarding the institutionalization of character values, data obtained from interviews, observations, and document studies indicated that the institutionalization of character values is carried out in three environments, known as the education tri-center. This includes the non-formal education unit PKBM through the institutionalization of rules or regulations. Secondly, the family through parenting activities conducted by PKBM every 2 months. Lastly, within the community through religious activities such as Quranic Education Gardens and study groups. In practice, there is a monitoring and evaluation process regarding the flow of character values that is adjusted to the situation and characteristics of the issues faced.

The management of a character values program, when viewed from the implementation mechanism, is heavily focused on the execution stage. Strengthening the institutional capacity of the PKBM institution with all its components is a fundamental input for the implementation process of character values, making it the core of a program and an integral part of a process. This stage is highly strategic as it will significantly determine the output and outcome of the established objectives.

The flow of character values conducted by PKBM Ash-Shoddiq, as referenced from the above interviews, is carried out through a preparation stage undertaken by the administrators through an annual program meeting held at the beginning of each semester. The agenda includes formulating and determining competency standards or learning outcomes to be achieved by learners in the equivalence education program at levels A, B, and C. This encompasses assignments and the establishment of character values to be achieved by learners within the PKBM Ash-Shoddiq environment. This is in line with what experts suggest, that the readiness of administrators to prepare for learning and the flow of character values must also be possessed by both administrators and learners who will receive the learning situation from educators or tutors. The formulation and determination of competency standards carried out by administrators, which concurrently involves designing and establishing character education, can be concluded as part of the planning stage in program management. Character education planning can be incorporated into learning modules, syllabi, or lesson plans (Rahmanianto, Hidayat, & Santika, 2021) to ensure that character education is inseparable from the teaching-learning process. According to Jemmy et al. (2023), management becomes a benchmark in education because good goals and policies in education depend on proper management. Managers of community education programs need to understand the program to be created according to the needs of learners, enabling the development of standards and other criteria (Saleh, Nasution, & Harahap, 2020). The determination of character values in competency standards is also consistent with the opinion of Darmawan & Rosmilawati (2020), stating that the development of basic character and curriculum tools, learning innovation, character cultivation, standardization of tools, and the assessment process are supportive facilities for the implementation of character education.

Furthermore, regarding the determination of values conducted by PKBM Ash-Shodiq in the preparation stage, this aligns with Syabus's (2015) opinion that preparedness for learners will influence the teaching and learning situation in the classroom. To elaborate further, Arikunto states that "readiness is a competence that must be possessed by an individual, so

someone who has competence means that person is adequately prepared to do something" (Arikunto, 2001). Character education is a process undertaken by educators to instill and develop character values in learners so that they can later be applied in community life (Salsabilah et al., 2021). The character education imparted by tutors to learners aims to shape them to have positive and good attitudes (Darmawan & Rosmilawati, 2020). Therefore, adequate readiness will support the development of character education in enhancing the behavioral competence of students. In the context of Islamic education, this research emphasizes the importance of understanding the specific educational unit context in the flow of character and life skills (Kusumawati & Hamzah, 2019).

The steps or procedures undertaken in the implementation of character values at PKBM Ash-Ashodiq are carried out through a process of socialization, preparation of learning tools, preparation of facilities and infrastructure. The flow of character values is then executed through: a) regulations and rules binding all academic members of PKBM; b) integration of character values with subjects delivered by educators or tutors. c) The character values built by PKBM include politeness, healthy lifestyle, independence, usefulness, creativity, and devotion. This aligns with the opinions expressed by experts, stating that the flow of character values refers to the continuous and sustainable process of character formation and development in education. According to Locke, Mill, and Spencer (as cited in Mei Ju et al., 2014), character education is the goal of schools and family concern. One relevant theory is the character education theory proposed by Ryan & Bohlin (1999), emphasizing the importance of integrating character education into all aspects of the curriculum and the life of the educational unit. This approach ensures that character formation is not limited to specific subjects but plays a role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of students throughout the curriculum and activities of the educational unit. Similar opinions are also expressed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2010), stating that character education is integrated through all subjects in schools or educational units.

Efforts in character education innovation have been outlined as follows. First, character education is integrated across all subjects, ensuring that values are woven into the content of each subject and that learning activities promote the practice of these values both inside and outside the classroom. This approach ensures that character education is a fundamental part of every educational activity. Second, character education is also embedded into student development activities, supporting the holistic growth of students. Additionally, the implementation of character education extends to the management of all school affairs, involving every member of the school community. These measures reflect a comprehensive approach to integrating character education into various aspects of school life, as emphasized by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2010) and the Directorate of Junior High School Education, Ministry of Education and Culture (2010).

Regarding the strategy and method of character value flow, it is conducted through a holistic integrative approach that combines character education with life skills education. Both approaches recognize the importance of developing learners' characters in balance with the mastery of academic knowledge and life skills. Referring to the above discussion, this aligns with the opinion expressed by Lickona (2020), stating that character education is the learning of moral, ethical, and personality values aimed at shaping students' characters for the better. Character education can be applied at all levels of education, and there is a close relationship between character learning and students' academic abilities. This is also in line with the opinion of Megawangi (cited in Pane & Patriana, 2016), that a successful education

system is one that equips its community with the good characters needed to build a dignified nation.

In PKBM Ash-Shodiq, the management strategy for instilling character values is also implemented through a life skills education program. The manager's strategy essentially aims to enhance the quality of human resources in facing various challenges in daily life, especially in the 21st century (Prasetyo et al., 2021). Life skills education, as defined by UNESCO (2013), refers to learning activities that teach the skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to navigate everyday life. Furthermore, UNESCO (2013) states that life skills education encompasses four main domains: social skills, academic skills, everyday life skills, and vocational skills. According to Bruner (1960, as cited in Prasetyo et al., 2021), life skills can be divided into five categories: 1) self-awareness skills, 2) rational thinking skills, 3) social skills, 4) academic skills, and 5) vocational skills. From these categories, it can be said that the flow of character education conducted at PKBM Ash-Shodiq falls into the life skills education category to enhance the self-awareness and social skills of learners. Danial et al., (2020) state that life skills education in the scope of non-formal education is focused on mastering vocational skills aimed at enhancing the independence of learners in seeking opportunities in their surroundings. Therefore, character values flowing from educators and managers at PKBM Ash-Shodiq, especially those related to independence and usefulness, are present through life skills education programs.

Finally, regarding the institutionalization of character values carried out in three environments or more commonly known as the educational tri-centers, namely non-formal educational units (PKBM) through institutionalizing rules or regulations, secondly families through parenting activities conducted by PKBM every two months, and finally, in the community through religious activities. According to research, one of which is mentioned in Medway (1989), parenting programs are very effective in improving parental abilities and have a positive impact on their children. Even if parenting programs are conducted in a networked form, as in the study by Spencer et al., (2020), they have a positive impact on improving parenting patterns. This is also in line with the opinion expressed by Fudyartanta (2019), stating that the educational process begins with the training of noble morals by providing Uswah Al Hasanah, followed by the development of reasoning and skills that support the future. Regarding education, the environment plays a significant role in personality development, and this educational environment is known as the Tri-center Education. The Tri-center education concept, proposed by Ki Hajar Dewantara, the founder of Taman Siswa and recognized as the Father of National Education, refers to the educational environment comprising education in the family environment, education in the institution or school environment, and education in the community environment (Fudyartanta, 2019). The role of the family is the first environment that provides the educational foundation for learners, the school provides facilities for the child's development, while the community environment shapes the attitudes and values of individual learners (Putri, 2023). Research conducted by Safitri in 2020 found that the environment can be a supportive factor for instilling character education values at PKBM.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of character values in the equivalency education program at PKBM Ash-Shodiq is carried out in an integrated and holistic manner, combining character values with life skills education. The character values built in PKBM Ash-Shodiq include politeness, healthy lifestyle, independence, usefulness, creativity, and devotion. In the integrated-holistic

approach implemented to instill these character values, the competency of tutors in developing the character and life skills of learners cannot be separated from their competence in teaching academic subjects. On the contrary, both are considered integral parts of the tutor's responsibility in shaping individuals with integrity and potential. The importance of instilling character and life skills in education is also emphasized to shape a generation with strong character, responsibility, and dedication to society and religion.

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