Character Formation Through Education: A Review of Educational Philosophy on Values and Virtue

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Abstract

Character education has become the main focus in the modern education system as a response to the need to form strong values and virtues among students. Social transformation and technological advances have influenced methods and approaches in character education, demanding continuous adaptation from educational institutions. Diversity in the classroom and the challenges of integrating these values into an already dense curriculum add complexity to the effective implementation of character education. This research aims to explore the methodology, challenges, and effectiveness of implementing character education in the current education system. This research was conducted using descriptive qualitative methods, where data was obtained from analysis of literature relevant to the topic. The data collected is then analyzed in depth to gain a broader understanding of the dynamics and results of character education. The conclusion of this research shows that character education is essential in forming individuals who not only excel academically but also have high moral integrity. Collaboration between teachers, parents, and the wider community has proven vital in strengthening character education. Apart from that, adaptation to social and technological changes is also needed to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of character education. Continuous and adaptive evaluation of character education programs is needed to ensure success in facing emerging challenges. Ultimately, effective integration of character education into the curriculum requires a holistic and inclusive approach to addressing diversity and complexity in the classroom.

Keywords: Character Education, Educational Philosophy, Values, Virtue, Moral Development

Abstrak

Pendidikan karakter telah menjadi fokus utama dalam sistem pendidikan modern sebagai respons terhadap kebutuhan untuk membentuk nilai-nilai dan kebajikan yang kuat di kalangan peserta didik. Transformasi sosial dan kemajuan teknologi telah memengaruhi metode dan pendekatan dalam pendidikan karakter, yang menuntut adaptasi berkelanjutan dari lembaga pendidikan. Keberagaman di kelas dan tantangan untuk mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai ini ke dalam kurikulum yang sudah padat menambah kompleksitas bagi implementasi pendidikan karakter yang efektif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi metodologi, tantangan, dan efektivitas implementasi pendidikan karakter dalam sistem pendidikan saat ini. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, di mana data diperoleh dari analisis literatur yang relevan dengan topik. Data yang dikumpulkan kemudian dianalisis secara mendalam untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang dinamika dan hasil pendidikan karakter. Simpulan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan karakter sangat penting dalam membentuk individu yang tidak hanya unggul secara akademis tetapi juga memiliki integritas moral yang tinggi. Kolaborasi antara guru, orang tua, dan masyarakat luas terbukti penting dalam memperkuat pendidikan karakter. Selain itu, adaptasi terhadap perubahan sosial dan teknologi juga diperlukan untuk menjaga relevansi dan efektivitas pendidikan karakter. Evaluasi berkelanjutan dan adaptif terhadap program pendidikan karakter diperlukan untuk memastikan keberhasilan dalam menghadapi tantangan yang muncul. Pada akhirnya, integrasi pendidikan karakter yang efektif ke dalam kurikulum memerlukan pendekatan holistik dan inklusif untuk mengatasi keberagaman dan kompleksitas di kelas.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Karakter, Filsafat Pendidikan, Nilai, Kebajikan, Pengembangan Moral

BACKGROUND

Character education is one of the main focuses of educational reform in many countries. The need for individuals who are not only academically competent but also have strong moral values requires the education system to formulate effective strategies for forming character. In the era of globalization and digitalization which increasingly erases boundaries, the demand to maintain integrity and ethics becomes increasingly important. This becomes increasingly relevant amidst the moral and ethical crisis occurring in various sectors of society (Rahayu & Dong, 2023). The role of education in shaping character has been debated for centuries and involves perspectives from various disciplines. The growth of information technology, changes in social dynamics, and the complexity of global problems increasingly add to the urgency for educational institutions to be more proactive in including values education in their curriculum. Character education not only aims to shape students to be more ethical in their actions but also to help them develop a deeper understanding of universal human values that support harmonious living together in a plural society (Young & Hordern, 2022).

In many countries, cases of corruption, violence, and other asocial behavior often make headlines in the mass media, indicating character and ethical deficits at various levels of society. This indicates that character education is not only urgent but must also be given more priority in the national and global education agenda. However, the cultivation of values and virtues through education is often hampered by various factors, including a lack of resources, uncertainty about effective teaching methods, and a lack of agreement in determining what values should be taught (Onyango, 2022). Furthermore, challenges in educating character also come from the diversity of backgrounds and values brought by students. Every individual comes to an educational institution with prejudices, values, and experiences that have been formed from their family and environment. This demands a flexible and adaptive approach to character education, which not only respects diversity but also encourages dialogue between different values (Barnett, 2020).

Responding to current global challenges, such as climate change, social injustice, and pandemics that require coordination and cooperation between countries, the role of education in forming responsible and proactive characters is becoming increasingly critical. Effective character education will not only form individuals who can contribute positively to society but also prepare them to become future leaders who are ethical and have integrity (Shultz et al., 2022). Therefore, the importance of in-depth research on how education can be effective in forming values and virtue is becoming increasingly urgent. This research aims to answer this need by examining in more depth the existing approaches and exploring new methods in educational philosophy for character formation. Through this review, it is hoped that new insights can be obtained that will help develop educational policies that not only cover students' cognitive aspects but also moral and ethical aspects that support the formation of complete character.

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative method to explore and understand in depth how character education is implemented and the challenges faced in practice. This method was chosen because of its ability to provide comprehensive insight into complex social phenomena, such as the formation of values and virtue through education. The data used comes from various previous research results which are still relevant to the discussion in this research, providing a strong basis for further analysis. After the research data has been collected, the next step is to process the data to identify patterns and gain a deeper understanding. By using this approach, the research aims to produce findings that are not only academically valid but also useful for educational practitioners, allowing them to design and implement character education programs that are more effective and responsive to the needs of students in the modern era (Sarosa, 2021).

Character Education

Character education according to the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 article 1 point 1 which reads: "Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and the skills needed by themselves, society, nation, and state" (Isroani & Huda, 2022).

Donni Koesoema said that character is the same as personality. Meanwhile, according to Masnur Muslich, the character is related to moral strength and has a positive connotation, not neutral. A person with character is a person who has (certain) moral qualities. According to Berkowitz, character is a characteristic or sign attached to an object or person. Characters become markers of identification (Stahlmann & Ruch, 2020).

As for character education, according to Thomas Licona, it is education to shape a person's personality through character education, the results of which can be seen in a person's real actions, namely good behavior, honesty, responsibility, respect for the rights of others, hard work, and so on (Zulela et al., 2022).

Regarding the meaning of character education, Raharjo stated that character education is a holistic educational process that connects the moral dimension with the social realm in students' lives as a foundation for the formation of a quality generation that can live independently and has the principles of truth that can be accounted for. Character education is a process of forming a person's behavior or character so that they can differentiate between good and bad things and can apply them in their daily life. So it is very important to instill it in children as early as possible (Abulibdeh et al., 2024).

Character education is essentially an integration of intelligence, personality, and noble morals. According to Thomas Lichona, character education is a supporting medium for students to understand, care, and act or act based on ethical values. In line with that, Suyanto emphasized that character education is character education plus, which involves aspects of knowledge (cognitive), feelings (feeling), and action (action) (Suryaatmaja et al., 2023). In the character education grand design of the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, it is stated that character education is a process of cultivating and empowering noble values within the educational unit (school), family environment, and community environment. These straight values come from educational theories, educational psychology and socio-cultural values, religious teachings, Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as well as Law (UU) No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (Sisdiknas); as well as the best experiences and real practices in everyday life (Suarno & Suryono, 2021).

Character education essentially aims to form a strong nation, competitive, has noble character, is moral, tolerant, works together, has a patriotic spirit, develops dynamically, and is oriented towards science and technology, all of which is imbued with faith and devotion to God Almighty based on Pancasila. Character education functions (1) to develop the basic potential to have a good heart, good thoughts, and good behavior; (2) to strengthen and build multicultural national behavior; (3) to increase the nation's competitive civilization in world relations (Arfani & Nakaya, 2020).

According to Nurchaili, character education needs to be planted as early as possible. With good character, we can do things that are appropriate, good, and correct so that we can take part towards success in life, harmony between people and be in the corridor of good behavior. On the other hand, if we violate it, we will experience uncomfortable things, from the light, such as being disliked or not respected by other people, to the serious, such as breaking the law (Peterson, 2020).

Philosophy of Education

John Dewey, one of the main figures in the philosophy of pragmatism, held the view that educational philosophy is not just an isolated teaching practice, but rather a process of forming and developing fundamental basic abilities. Dewey believed that education must integrate intellectual thinking power and emotional feeling power, to form a complete character in humans (Jarrah et al., 2020). According to him, education must focus on developing individuals who are not only intelligent in academic aspects but also empathetic and ethical in everyday life. Dewey emphasized the importance of process-oriented learning experiences, where students are invited to be actively involved in their learning, and discover and explore independently, which ultimately forms critical and reflective thinking habits (Estrada et al., 2021).

On the other hand, Thompson defines philosophy more broadly as an approach to understanding problems as a whole, without limiting the view to only certain aspects such as goals, methods, or tools. This approach requires educators to look beyond what appears on the surface and examine the implications of every aspect of education. This means that in designing a pedagogical approach, an educator must consider not only how the material is taught, but also how the material is received by students, its impact on students' thinking and emotions, and the long-term consequences of the learning process for individuals and society as a whole. Thompson's approach calls for a holistic vision in education that recognizes the complexity of humans and the various dimensions of the lives they lead (McLean et al., 2023).

Combining these two views, educational philosophy can be seen as a reflection of educational ideology that originates from the character and philosophy of an educator, based on his experience in the world of education and life in general, as well as from his in-depth study of various relevant scientific disciplines. This philosophy is not just a theory but is the basis for educators to develop innovative ways of educating that are responsive to evolving needs and challenges (An & Oliver, 2021). With a deep understanding of various scientific aspects, an educator can design teaching methods that are not only effective in producing academic output, but also support the development of students' character, encouraging them to become individuals who think critically, and creatively, and are full of empathy in dealing with various situations in life (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022).

Brubacher stated the relationship between philosophy and educational philosophy, in this case education: that philosophy not only gives birth to science or new knowledge but also gives birth to educational philosophy. Philosophy is an activity of human thinking that seeks to achieve policy and wisdom. Meanwhile, educational philosophy is a science that essentially answers questions that arise in the field of education. Because it is philosophical, this educational philosophy is essentially the application of philosophical analysis to the field of education (Canillo & Bendanillo, 2023).

Moral

Morals are a set of principles or values that govern human behavior and actions. Morals play an important role in shaping how individuals and societies understand what is right and wrong, as well as in guiding their choices and actions. Morals involve considerations regarding what is considered good and bad, fair and unfair, right and wrong. Morals also include considerations regarding responsibility, honesty, integrity, and respect for the rights and dignity of others (Lau et al., 2021).

Morals are usually influenced by a variety of factors, including religion, culture, family values, personal experiences, and social norms. Although moral values may vary among different individuals and cultures, some general moral principles held by many people include principles such as not killing, not stealing, not lying, respecting others, and obeying the rule of law. Morals also include ethical considerations, which is a branch of philosophy that studies moral theories and principles. Ethics

addresses questions such as whether there are objective moral principles, how to make sound moral decisions, and how to measure the moral consequences of an action (Bentahila et al., 2021).

In society, morals can also be manifested in the form of laws and regulations that regulate people's behavior. Laws often reflect moral values that are considered important in a society. Several theories of moral development have been put forward by experts in the fields of psychology and ethics. The two most famous moral development theories that have influenced many thinkers are Lawrence Kohlberg's theory and Carol Gilligan's theory (Mahy et al., 2022).

Lawrence Kohlberg developed a theory of moral development based on cognitive and psychological approaches. According to Kohlberg, individuals experience six interrelated levels of moral development, which are divided into three main levels:

a) Pre-Conventional Level: At this level, morality is based on laws and rules established by external authorities. This level is further divided into two stages: punishment-and-punishment orientation and obedience-and-usefulness orientation.

b) Conventional Level: At this level, morality is related to meeting social expectations and maintaining interpersonal relationships. This level is also divided into two stages: approval-and-obedience orientation and authority-and-social-rule orientation.

c) Post-Conventional Level: At this level, individuals have moral principles that are based on universal principles and individual ethics. This level also consists of two stages: social-contract-and-rules-of-agreement orientation and universal-ethical-principles orientation.

Kohlberg's theory concludes that moral development is a multi-level process that involves a more complex understanding of morality. More morally mature individuals tend to have the ability to view moral issues from multiple points of view and base their moral decisions on higher ethical principles (Mitchell et al., 2020).

Carol Gilligan emphasized differences in moral development between men and women. According to Gilligan, women tend to have a different moral approach that focuses more on care and interpersonal relationships, whereas men tend to have a moral approach that focuses more on justice and individual rights. Gilligan proposed three different levels of moral development in women:

a) Self-care orientation: This level emphasizes meeting personal needs and self-interest.

b) Relationship care orientation: This level emphasizes attention to the interests of others and the maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

c) Duty ethical orientation: This level emphasizes an understanding of broader social responsibilities and more universal moral principles.

Gilligan's theory concludes that moral development can be influenced by gender factors and differences in the emphasis on care and justice in moral decision-making (Mazza et al., 2020).

Dynamics of the Role of Education in Shaping Character

Historically, the role of education in shaping character has experienced significant shifts, influenced by social, economic, and technological changes that have occurred from time to time. In the past, character education often focused on instilling religious and traditional values, whereas schools were seen as an extension of family and community values. However, along with the development of an increasingly pluralistic and multicultural society, character education is now more oriented toward universal values such as justice, integrity, and empathy. This approach aims to prepare students to be able to interact and contribute in a diverse and global society.

Rapid and widespread social changes, such as globalization and technological advances, have also had a major impact on character education methods. Information and communication technology, for example, has opened access to a variety of unlimited learning resources, allowing character education to be carried out not only through textbooks and direct instruction but also through digital media, games, and simulations. However, technology also raises new challenges, such as issues of cyberbullying and the degradation of online ethics, which require new responses in the character education curriculum to teach students about digital ethics and social responsibility in using technology.

In this context, the role of teachers and educational institutions becomes increasingly important and complex. Teachers are no longer just transmitters of knowledge but also guides in forming students' character. They must be equipped with the skills and resources to integrate character learning into all aspects of education, from formal classroom instruction to extracurricular activities. Educational institutions must also be responsive to these new needs by developing curricula that include holistic character education, providing professional training for teachers, and creating an environment that supports students' moral and ethical growth.

Apart from that, the role of informal and non-formal education is also very important in supporting formal education efforts in forming character. Informal education that occurs at home and through daily interactions with family, as well as non-formal education which can include scout activities, sports clubs, and youth programs, all provide opportunities to strengthen the values and virtues taught at school. These activities help students apply these values in a wider context and real situations so that learning becomes more meaningful and internalized.

Therefore, the dynamic role of education in forming character does not only require changes in the way of teaching or the content taught but also in the education system as a whole. This includes how institutions respond to social and technological change, how teachers can continue to develop their abilities in educating character, and how informal and non-formal education can be better integrated with formal education to create a comprehensive approach to building student character.

Challenges in Implementing Character Education

Integrating character education into an already busy curriculum is one of the main challenges faced by schools today. To meet rigorous academic standards, schools often find it difficult to allocate sufficient time and resources to character education programs. A curriculum that is full of mandatory subjects means that character education sometimes receives only minimal attention, being seen as an addition and not as a core component. This often reduces the effectiveness of character education programs because there is not enough space for in-depth development.

Apart from curriculum problems, diversity in the classroom also poses special challenges in implementing character education. Schools in many parts of the world today are more diverse than ever. Differences in culture, religion, and socio-economic background among students can influence how values and virtues are taught and accepted. Teachers must be able to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate these diverse perspectives, ensuring that the values taught do not conflict with students' family and cultural values. This requires high sensitivity and adaptation on the part of educators, as well as a curriculum designed to be inclusive and respect pluralism.

Furthermore, consideration of individual student needs and the school's collective goals in character education also creates a dilemma. Each student has a personal uniqueness that may require a specialized approach, while collective goals often demand standardization in teaching and evaluation. Finding a balance between respecting student individuality and ensuring that all students gain the same values and virtues is a complex task. Teachers need to create a supportive learning environment, where students are not only taught universal values but also given opportunities to develop their character in authentic and meaningful ways.

Lastly, the gap between character education theory and practice in the field often becomes a barrier to effective implementation. Although there is much research and theory that supports the importance of character education, the application of these theories in real educational practice is often not simple. Lack of teacher training in character education, limited resources, and lack of institutional support are some of the factors that make character education practice not always in line with ideal theory. This requires more commitment from all education stakeholders, including policy makers, school administrators, teachers, parents, and the community; to ensure that the values taught are not only theoretical but also applied and internalized by students in their daily lives.

All of these challenges demonstrate that effective implementation of character education requires an integrated, reflective, and adaptive approach that not only addresses structural and curriculum barriers but is also sensitive to cultural diversity and individual student needs.

Character Education Methodology

To teach values and virtues effectively, character education utilizes various methodological approaches that suit diverse needs and contexts. One of the most significant methods is the use of stories and parables that allow students to explore ethical and moral concepts through narratives that are engaging and relevant to their lives. This not only facilitates understanding of concepts but also promotes empathy and personal reflection. Additionally, a project-based approach that engages students in activities that require collaboration, ethical decisions, and practical problem-solving can greatly influence the way students understand and internalize these values.

The role of discussion and dialogue in the classroom is very important in character education, especially related to moral and ethical issues. Through open discussions, students can explore multiple perspectives and develop their critical thinking skills. Teachers can facilitate these discussions by providing hypothetical scenarios or case studies that challenge students to consider various options and the consequences of their actions. These discussions not only support intellectual development but also help students develop the ability to empathize and interact respectfully with others who may have different views.

The use of technology and new media has also revolutionized the way character education can be provided. From interactive games designed to teach values to social media platforms used for positive social campaigns, technology provides valuable and engaging tools for reaching students. Programs that utilize multimedia and virtual reality technology can immerse students in situations that require moral judgment without real-world consequences, providing a safe space for the exploration of values and decisions.

Evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of character education is another important component of this methodology. To measure the impact of character education programs, educational institutions must use various assessment methods, both quantitative and qualitative.

Assessments can include attitude and behavior surveys, analysis of student reflections, as well as peer and self-assessments. Feedback from parents and the community is also very important in assessing the social impact of character education. Based on this data, schools can adjust or improve curriculum and teaching practices to increase their effectiveness, ensuring that character education is not only theoretical but also practical and relevant to students' lives.

This overall methodology represents an integrated approach to character education, emphasizing the importance of narrative, social interaction, innovative use of technology, and ongoing evaluation to develop solid character and values among students. This method demands activeness, creativity, and ongoing commitment from educators to ensure that character education has a positive and significant impact on student development.

The Future of Character Education

The future of character education is likely to undergo significant evolution in line with ongoing social, technological, and economic changes. In the next few decades, we can predict that character education will require adaptation to the needs of an ever-growing generation. Characteristics historically taught in schools—such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy—will remain important, but the way we teach these values will require approaches that are more innovative and relevant to today's world situation. For example, in this digital era, online integrity and media literacy will become important aspects of character education, teaching students how to act ethically on the internet and understanding the impact of the information they disseminate.

Global demographic changes also affect character education. As populations move and multiculturalism increases, schools around the world increasingly face the challenge of integrating students from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. This requires that character education not only focus on universal values but also respect and integrate cultural diversity. Character education strategies must reflect a broader understanding of social justice, respect differences, and encourage intercultural cooperation. This is where character education develops not only to educate individuals but also to foster harmonious and inclusive communities.

To support the effective and inclusive integration of values and virtues, educational policy development needs to be directed at creating a supportive learning environment. These policies must embrace diversity and ensure that character education is integrated into all aspects of the curriculum, not simply as an add-on or separate program. This includes integrating these values into academic subjects, extracurricular activities, and other school activities. Education policies must also ensure that teachers and school staff have the resources, training, and support necessary to implement character education programs successfully.

International collaboration is key in developing a responsive and adaptive character education curriculum. In the era of globalization, sharing knowledge and best practices between countries can enrich the understanding and implementation of character education. Through this collaboration, countries can learn from each other about effective approaches to facing multicultural challenges and formulate strategies that promote global concern and intercultural awareness. Additionally, international collaboration can help standardize certain elements of character education, allowing for easier global mobility of students and educators without compromising educational integrity and values.

The future of character education is about creating individuals who are not only proficient in academic competence but also strong in social and moral virtues. Effective character education

will support the development of a generation that can contribute positively at both local and global levels, adapt to environmental changes, and encourage a more just and empathetic society. The key to all of this is education that can respond to the dynamics of the times while remaining loyal to the basic principles of morality and humanity.

CONCLUSION

Character education is an important aspect that plays a role in forming values and virtues in individuals. Through varied approaches such as interactive discussions, the use of stories and media, and group-based projects, character education not only educates about good moral norms but also teaches students how to apply them in real life. This shows that character education must be an integral component of the education system to develop a generation that is not only competent in academic aspects but also rich in moral values and empathy. In addition, the challenges faced in implementing character education, such as limitations in the curriculum and diversity in the classroom, require adaptive and inclusive strategies. The continued use of technology and evaluation in character education offers opportunities to improve and expand its impact. Therefore, a holistic and collaborative approach between teachers, parents, and the wider community is vital. By strengthening this collaboration and continuing to evaluate and adapt educational methodologies, we can ensure that character education achieves the desired goal of forming individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also of high integrity.

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