

Research Article

Strengthening Character Education Through School Culture in The New Normal Era: A Case Study at Al-Karim Lampung Basic Natural School

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening character education in schools is a government policy as an effort to re-put character as the core of education. The process of teaching and learning activities is currently carried out online and face-to-face while still prioritizing health protocols due to the pandemic. So, currently schools are required to continue to innovate in order to maximize the character education process in schools. The purpose of this study is to describe the strengthening of character education through school culture, the obstacles and efforts made during the pandemic. This research uses descriptive qualitative research. Data collection techniques using observation, interviews, and documentation. The research location was conducted at Alam Al-Karim Elementary School, Lampung. The research subjects are the Principal, Deputy Principal and Teachers. Based on the results of the research, strengthening character education through school culture is carried out in the form of habituation activities namely, Morning Activity, Daily Worship, Murajaah Qur'an, and Green Therapy as a means of socializing character values and awareness to maintain health and mentally facing a pandemic. The obstacles are the limited time available and limited physical communication. The effort made by the school is through making a special curriculum in the new normal era. The conclusion of this research is that strengthening character education through school culture in the middle of a pandemic carried out by the Alam Al-Karim Elementary School is an alternative concept that can be applied in order to make character education effective as an important goal in education.

Keywords: Strengthening Character Education, School Culture, School Nature

Introduction

In 2020 at this time, the Indonesian people entered a new normal era caused by the COVID-

19 pandemic which also involved all elements of life globally. One area that has been affected is education. Education in Indonesia is

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currently directed at the online teaching and learning process and there are also several regions that have implemented face-to-face with a note that they still prioritize health protocols. Under these conditions, the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) asks principals and teachers to continue to look for effective and efficient learning models that can be used in these conditions [1].

In essence, education is one of the nation's alternatives in order to instill character in individuals. This is stated by David & Shields (2011) which reveals that the essence of education is character [2]. So that for a nation, character is the basis of good governance. On the other hand, the characterless citizen is a threat to society, nation and state. The integrity of every citizen is the only guarantee of good citizenship [3]. In addition, character education is expected to create a more orderly society, have a good understanding of citizenship, and even be more productive as part of the nation and state [4]. Therefore, the urgency to build the character of citizens through education must continue to be maximized, because through good character, the possibility of a cultured nation and state can be realized.

Meanwhile, the character education of the Indonesian nation is based on Pancasila as the foundation of the nation and the vision of the life of the Indonesian nation. These characters are in line with the values of life, namely various habits that universally underlie a good and harmonious relationship with one another [5]. This is in line with how the current grand design of character education through Strengthening Character Education which carries the values of Pancasila as a core character value that must be instilled through education. Strengthening Character Education is a process of formation, transformation, transmission in developing the potential of students to be intelligent, have noble character, and behave well in accordance with the values of Pancasila [6].

One of the efforts to strengthen and instill character values is through habituation at school. Habit is repetition, where through habituation will train good habits for children [7]. According to Wibowo (2013) that "Character values need to be grown through the habits of daily life at school (habituation), namely

through school culture because school culture is an alternative to the success of character education itself [8].

In its application, according to Lickona, states that there are six main elements in the process of forming a moral culture in schools, namely the principal as a pioneer, a disciplined school, a strong sense of kinship, democracy in school management, strong cooperation, as well as a commitment to taking the time to solve problems [9]. This confirms that in an effort to strengthen character education in schools, it is necessary to integrate all elements in schools. So, the effectiveness of strengthening character education can be maximized properly.

One school that has implemented learning with its educational concept in the current new normal era is Nature School. Natural School is a school institution that contains an educational concept that is student-centered and makes nature an object and learning area and internalizes Islamic values in all its activities at school [10]. Based on research conducted by researchers at one of the Natural Schools, namely Alam Al-Karim Lampung Elementary School, it was found that the school had implemented learning with new concepts and curricula in the midst of new normal conditions. This is carried out as a step to face learning in the midst of a pandemic without leaving the characteristics of schools as schools that focus on character education. Thus, researchers are interested in dissecting more about the concepts applied by schools in order to meet the needs of character education in the current new normal era.

Methods

This study used a qualitative research design. This research was conducted at Al-Karim Natural Elementary School, Lampung, which is located in Elang street, Pinang Jaya, Kemiling, Bandar Lampung City, Lampung Province. The informants of this study involved the Principal, Deputy Principal, and facilitators or teachers. Data collection techniques used in this research are through observation, interviews, and also documentation. Determination of data sources on the interviewee was carried out purposively, that is, selected with certain considera-

tions and goals [11]. Meanwhile, the observation was carried out using participatory observation techniques where the researcher was also involved as an inside person and also the researcher as an outsider. Documentation is done by collecting data or archives as well as pictures to complete the existing information. To prove the validity of the data, namely by using data triangulation the researchers obtained from interview, observation, and documentation sources. The data analysis process carried out included data reduction, presentation, data, and drawing conclusions. The process for data validity was carried out using triangulation, which used triangulation, namely triangulation of sources and triangulation of techniques.

Results and Discussion

Character Education Strengthening Program at SD Alam Al-Karim Lampung

Strengthening Character Education is an educational movement that is the responsibility of education units as an effort to strengthen the character of students through harmonizing hearts, feelings, thoughts, and sports by involving cooperation between educational units, families and communities. Character strengthening education contains five main character values, namely religious, nationalist, mutual cooperation, independence and integrity, all of which originate from the values of Pancasila. Alam Al-Karim Elementary School is one of the educational concepts that is still integrated with other Nature Schools, where according to Murdiani and Suhendi (2012), it is said that Nature School is not the name of a school, but an educational concept in which students not only learn in nature, but also learn by nature [12].

Based on the results of observations, that the strengthening of character education in SD Alam Al-Karim has a strong character education focus, where in each of the programs in the school there is more on character building of students as a basic point in every activity such as starting each activity by praying, apologize when making mistakes, and also accustom students to be more independent and disciplined in every job. Based on interviews conducted with research sources, that the strengthening of character education at SD Alam Al-Karim Lampung is directed at building character

values that are in accordance with Islamic teachings. This is based on the concept of the School of Nature itself, namely returning to the Al-Quran and Sunnah [13] (Safar, 2016). On the other hand, specifically that the programs implemented are aimed at shaping students' Islamic morals, abilities in self-management and leadership, building an entrepreneurial spirit, and also having scientific skills. In this case, strengthening the character of Islam is a characterization formed from Islamic values which are based on the prophetic educational mission of the Prophet Muhammad SAW which is a system that is inherent as a spirit as well as a moral foundation for the implementation of the entire existing educational process [14]. Even so, in carrying out the existing character education strengthening process also does not leave the concept of the main values that exist in strengthening character education as instructed by the government.

School Culture at SD Alam Al-Karim Lampung

School culture is a habit that is carried out in schools to develop good habits that exist in students so that they become characters that are inherent in students [1]. The school culture design implemented at Alam Al-Karim Elementary School is in the form of habituation and an exemplary process. According to Komalasari & Saripudin [7], habituation is a process of forming attitudes and behaviors that tend to be permanent and automatic through a repetitive learning process [15]. The habituation process not only teaches right or wrong knowledge, but also allows students to feel good and bad values [16]. While the concept of exemplary is the right method in character education, because exemplary method is an educational method that is applied through a good role model in the form of real behavior that can be observed by students [17]. This is also appropriate if applied to elementary school-aged children, because the characteristics of elementary school children are imitating and learning to imitate the characters from their environment.

Based on the observations made, that the school culture that is applied in the Nature School is essentially focused on character building through habituation in the form of

habits that are sustainable and exemplary by the teacher in order so that students can imitate the characters displayed by them. Based on the interview, the habituation and exemplary processes that are applied are more of an educational approach to students while still prioritizing good character internalization to students, namely shaping students' Islamic characters. On the other hand, that the school

culture in Alam Al-Karim Elementary School is the right medium to do in order to shape student character because through this culture it can maximize the character education process outside of the core learning contained in every class or learning in general. The several forms of school culture at SD Alam Al-Karim Lampung are as follows.

Table 1: School Culture of SD Alam Al-Karim Lampung

NO	Name of Program / Activity	Activity Description	Character developed
1	Morning Activity	Morning Activity Activities in the form of thematic activities in order to prepare students before carrying out the teaching and learning process in schools. This program is approximately 15-30 minutes in duration. Some of the activities are usually playing (outdoors) with teacher supervision and cleaning the school environment together.	Gotong Royong, Discipline
2	Daily worship	Daily worship which is performed as a habit is divided into two, namely shallat daily worship and prayer	Religious
3	Murajaah Qur'an	Murajaah Qur'an Murajaah or the process of memorizing Al-Quran verses according to the student's level. besides memorizing certain hadiths.	Religious
4	Apple Morning	Apple Morning Apple morning is held incidentally, such as national day celebrations as well as a pre-start activity before starting important school activities	Nationalist
5	Snack Time	Snack Time Snack Time is an activity carried out by students as a break or pause before carrying out further learning. The strengthening of character can be seen from several special rules, namely that each student at the basic level is given responsibility for each item (such as lunch boxes, tissue / hand rags, spoons, and so on).	Independence, integrity

Based on this description, the school culture activity in the morning is a program designed with the aim of preparing students before entering the teaching and learning process. This activity is carried out in the morning.

In its implementation, students are given time to play games simultaneously facilitated and supervised by the teacher. In this case, apart from being a pre-learning process, this activity is also carried out as a means to shape student

character such as responsibility for the facilities and time given, as well as discipline in the time available. Besides playing together, morning activities are usually carried out in the form of mutual cooperation to clean the school environment and the environment around the school in order to create love and concern for the environment and the natural surroundings.

The next school culture is in the form of daily worship activities. In this case, daily worship in the form of prayer and prayer as obligatory worship as a Muslim. Daily prayer services are a unique habit in Nature School, including getting used to praying before doing any activity. Meanwhile, shallat is a habit of shallat dhuha in the morning and shallat in congregation in the afternoon. This is a school effort to shape the religious character of students.

Another school culture in the form of muraajaah activities or the process of memorizing verses from the Al-Quran and hadith is an activity that must be carried out by students. Habits are also sought to develop the religious character of the existing students. The muraajaah process is directly guided by a special teacher who has the ability to read and memorize the Al-Quran.

School culture in the form of Apple Morning activities carried out incidentally. Usually held on big days or national days. The agenda is in the form of ceremonies that are often carried out like other ceremonies, such as raising the red and white flag, singing compulsory songs, praying and so on in the context of the commemoration. Through the Apel Pagi activity, one of the character values that will be instilled is the value of nationalist character as one of the important characters instilled through school.

School culture in the form of Snack Time activities is a characteristic of habituation in Nature School, namely in the form of snacking together but done together and having its own rules that must be done by students. For example, students queue up to get food, so students are required to bring their own cutlery and are given the responsibility to always clean the utensils they carry. This is an effort to instill independence and responsibility and the value of integrity in students.

Learning in the New Normal Era of SD Alam Al-Karim Lampung

One of the areas affected by the current Covid 19 pandemic is the education sector. In accordance with the direction of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) learning activities are currently being carried out online to prevent the spread of the corona virus disease (Covid-19) [28]. At present, several impacts that can be felt in the teaching and learning process include changes in the learning system which are currently being transferred to the online learning process which has become a new education scheme, as well as the emergence of gaps in society, especially those related to the economy because the learning load is changed to online [19]. This also applies to SD Alam Al-Karim in Lampung, where learning is currently being transferred online. Based on observations made that in order to strive for the teaching and learning process during the pandemic, SD Al-Karim Lampung made several efforts, including by making a new curriculum by integrating with prevailing conditions and also based on directions from the government. Based on the results of interviews conducted, the curriculum was created by prioritizing learning by prioritizing character, namely Islamic morals as one of the characteristics of Nature School. In addition, the curriculum is also held face-to-face, but still in accordance with health protocols, the two-day distribution is done online, while the other day is done face-to-face with a limited number.

In intensifying the teaching and learning process and means of strengthening character, SD Alam Al-Karim also involves the role of parents in order to further strengthen the learning process and strengthen the character of students in particular. Lickona, Schapss & Lewis explained that the partnership between schools and parents is very important, especially in developing children's character [20] (Ramdan & Fauziah, 2019). This is done by developing intensive communication in the form of activity reports and periodic evaluations. In addition to online and face-to-face learning, the school has also designed a new learning design, namely "Green Therapy" in the form of a program with outdoor activities (usually done in

the open) while still implementing health protocols. According to the school, this was done as an alternative to overcome boredom in learning amid the current outbreak conditions. These activities are in the form of education about health procedures, light games as a means of refreshing, and other agendas related to other outdoor activities. Off-field trips are an example of a learning experience because they provide opportunities for learners to see and experience the world outside the classroom, challenge previously held ideas, broaden their thinking, and engage them in active learning [21]. In addition, this program is also implemented as a means of strengthening character, especially the character of discipline in the midst of efforts to maintain children's discipline in the midst of an epidemic that is currently endemic.

Constraints and Efforts in Strengthening Character Education through School Culture in the New Normal Era

During the New Normal era, school activities had many influences, one of which was a new adaptation. New adaptations that have emerged are in the form of teaching and learning activities carried out online as well as face-to-face but with limited activities such as maintaining distance, wearing masks, and limiting the number of students involved in learning to reduce the risk of spreading the virus during the Pandemic. This certainly forces schools to be able to maximize the effective learning process even in the midst of the current pandemic.

In an effort to maximize the process of strengthening character education in the current new normal era, in essence schools are required to increasingly innovate in order to maximize the character education process in schools. School culture is one of the media that can be used in order to help transfer character values to students in schools. In the process of strengthening character education through school culture at SD Alam Al-Karim, of course not all processes can run well. As for the obstacles that arise based on the results of interviews with informants that the main obstacle is the availability of time and also the limited direct communication in each lesson. In addition, the existence of new adaptations during this

pandemic also requires time for how schools can design a curriculum that is appropriate and applicable in every learning process. New adaptations such as learning that is carried out online or offline with limited meetings and in accordance with health protocols of course will also have an impact on learning outcomes, especially strengthening the character of students in schools. so that in this case, creativity and innovation are very much needed by teachers so that the process of strengthening character education can take place well. Observations made by researchers also show that there are difficulties for schools, especially teachers, because the character education process for students in schools is very limited due to the current pandemic such as teachers having to prepare different learning methods and models and also the process of habituation carried out through school culture is very difficult to monitor. if done online only. Because, in the process of seeing the development of student character, it will be maximized if it goes through a process of approaching students directly.

In connection with the obstacles in the process of strengthening character education through school culture at SD Alam Al-Karim Lampung, the school has also made efforts to design learning, especially in order to strengthen character education in schools, including through the creation of a new curriculum. This new curriculum was created with the adaptation and integration of the Nature School Curriculum with the regulatory instructions provided by the government during this pandemic. The focus of the formation of this new curriculum is in the context of strengthening character education, namely in the form of special programs during a pandemic with a focus on cultivating Islamic moral values and also focusing on student awareness with new adaptations during a pandemic. This is based on the results of research through interviews with informants as an alternative in order to maximize the strengthening of students' character despite the current pandemic conditions. In addition, in an effort to maximize the online learning process, schools are striving to create programs in which there are families that are involved in the character education process while students study online at home. This is in

the form of reports that are built between class teachers and parents so that the development of student character can be measured. In this case, Lickona (1992) states that the family is one of the environments that has the responsibility of shaping and building children's character. On the other hand, according to research that the family has a strong influence on character building in children. Sanderse (2013) also states that in social learning theory, children learn a behavior through observation and direct relationships with other people around them. So, in this case, the family has enormous potential in order to become an institution that has an important role in the development of children's character [22]. Thus, family involvement in order to strengthen student character is also the right alternative in developing student character.

Conclusion

Strengthening Educational Character is an important effort that schools must do as a vehicle for strengthening the character of their students. The role of schools in character strengthening requires careful planning and efforts, so that every plan or program that is made can be carried out well and on target. Alam Al-Karim Elementary School as one of the schools that focuses on strengthening the character of its students has tried to design a program tailored to the characteristics of the school by integrating it with current educational instructions, namely in the form of a new school curriculum adapted to the current New Normal conditions.

Based on the results of the research and discussion previously described, it can be concluded that the strengthening of character education through school culture in the New Normal Era of SD Alam Al-Karim Lampung is carried out, among others, through school programs in the form of habituation and exemplary building aimed at instilling values. character towards their students. As for the current pandemic conditions, activities in order to strengthen character education through school culture are more specific, including the inculcation of Islamic character values or morals which also contain several character sub-values such as integrity, responsibility, independence, discipline, and religion. through Morning

Activity, Daily Worship, Murajaah Quran, Morning Apple, and Snack Time. The activities are carried out online and offline, namely in the form of parental involvement in the form of daily worship reports as suggestions for monitoring student character development. All of this is summarized in the creation of a new curriculum which contains the learning process during this pandemic. The obstacles that exist are in the form of limited time and also direct communication which causes obstacles to the process of strengthening student character, especially related to assessing student character development. In addition, the efforts shown by the school are in addition to the existence of a special curriculum in the pandemic era, namely by intensifying the involvement of parents especially in helping the process of instilling character values towards students.

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