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**Building Students' Character and Life Skills
through the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum**

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of increasingly sophisticated technology requires humans to optimize intellectually and morally. Education plays a role in producing a generation of intellectuals and noble characters. Islamic religious education is the basis for becoming a reference for the source of the actual value of power that can lead to the aspired activity, namely character education as the needs of the Indonesian nation. This study aims to examine character education through Islamic religious education in the era of the digital revolution. This study uses a qualitative method with the type of library research or library research. Researchers analyzed written literature as the primary source in books, research journals, and seminar proceedings. Based on this literature review, character education through Islamic religious education is based on religious values, Pancasila, culture, and national education goals. Implementing morality (character) in Islamic religious education through teaching, habituation, coercion, punishment, fosters student character.

ABSTRAK

Manusia harus meningkatkan moral dan intelektualnya ketika teknologi yang lebih kompleks dikembangkan. Generasi yang cerdas dan terhormat dibentuk oleh pendidikan. Pendidikan agama Islam merupakan landasan untuk berfungsi sebagai sumber kebenaran, ukuran kekuatan yang dapat mengarah pada hasil yang diinginkan, dan diperlukan untuk kebutuhan masyarakat Indonesia dalam pengembangan karakter. Penelitian ini mengkaji peran pendidikan agama Islam dalam pengembangan karakter di era revolusi digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dan bentuk penelitian kepustakaan. Buku, jurnal penelitian, dan prosiding seminar merupakan sumber utama literatur tertulis yang dievaluasi oleh peneliti. Berdasarkan penilaian literatur ini, diyakini bahwa pengembangan karakter melalui pendidikan agama Islam berlabuh pada tujuan pendidikan nasional, Pancasila, prinsip-prinsip agama, dan budaya. Membangun karakter siswa melalui instruksi, pemodelan, pembiasaan, paksaan, dan hukuman merupakan tujuan pendidikan agama Islam.

PRELIMINARY

Education is one of the main pillars in the development of quality human resources. In this context, education does not only focus on mastering science and technical skills, but also on building good character. Strong character is essential to face the challenges of life in an era of globalization that is full of change and complexity. Therefore, character education has become one of the main focuses in the education system in various countries, including Indonesia.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very strategic role in building students' character and life skills. Through the PAI curriculum, students are taught moral, ethical, and spiritual values that can guide them in living their daily lives. PAI not only teaches the ritual aspect, but also instills positive attitudes and

behaviors needed in social interactions. In this context, religious education is expected to contribute in creating a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has integrity, empathy, and social responsibility.

However, despite the importance of character education through PAI, challenges in its implementation still exist. Some of these include teachers' lack of understanding of effective teaching methods, lack of support from parents, and lack of integration between religious and general education. Therefore, collaborative efforts between schools, parents, and communities are needed to create a supportive environment for students' character building (Sitika, et.al., 2023).

In this study, it will be discussed how the Islamic religious education curriculum can be optimized to build students' character and life skills. This research is expected to contribute to the development of a more effective and relevant curriculum, as well as provide recommendations for educators and stakeholders in improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative method. This research model uses library research, with inductive and deductive analysis derived from some literature analysis. This research, called library research, is a process of understanding textual data, then the author interprets it with descriptive analytical methods, specifically starting with systematic and consistent data collection, then analyzing, selecting, and combining to draw further conclusions. With deductive analysis method, from general problems, specific conclusions are drawn. This research was conducted to examine what are the steps and techniques for evaluating religious education learning outcomes. The research is qualitative in nature by analyzing several literature books and as the main data source.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Importance of Islamic Religious Education

Islamic education has three terms: tarbiyah, ta'lim and ta'dib. All three are integrated into one unit in the learning process. Tarbiyah is defined as the transfer of knowledge from educators to students to form noble attitudes and philosophies in the understanding and perception of life, to form ethical, humane, and ethical humans. Ta'lim is the process of delivering knowledge to individuals through the learning process, emphasizing the cognitive abilities of students. While ta'dib emphasizes on the education of manners. The process of Islamic education is directed at cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. Therefore, it is unfair to only test students' cognitive abilities, but assess them comprehensively (Junaidi, et.al., 2023).

The importance of Islamic religious education that is actualized and realized through morals for children is very important to do. This is because in the cycle of human life, the period of childhood is the time when this period becomes the most important and is recorded strongly in the child's memory. So, the importance of Islamic education in shaping children's character that can affect the development of children in accordance with Islamic character, both education carried out, parents, society, as well as the environment and teachers. Education based on Islamic religion is recognized as very important to be upheld and used for the formation of a person's character.

In addition to religious education, moral or moral education is also an important pillar for fostering students' religious character. The purpose of moral education is so that children can distinguish right from wrong and develop good attitudes and behavior in dealing with other people and the surrounding environment. Through moral education, children will be instilled with universal values such as honesty, tolerance, cooperation, and compassion for others.

For more details here, researchers write down some important objectives of Islamic religious education, among others, namely:

a. Character Building

A person's character will begin to form through their environment, family, school and the surrounding community. Several parties have a crucial role in the formation of an individual's character, including parents, siblings, peers, teachers and other people around the individual. According to Lickona, the formation of a person's character is formed because of habits that continue to persist from childhood to adolescence. Parents have good and bad influences that will eventually form the habits of their children.

Every individual certainly has life experiences that come from the surrounding environment, family, school. A person's life experiences can also be obtained through books, television, the internet, and other sources that have the potential to increase a person's knowledge. In the process of gaining life experiences, the role of a person's conscious mind is very dominant. So that the mind will carry out the filtering process on information that enters the self through the five human senses. Therefore, Islamic religious education aims to shape the character of students to become individuals who are noble, honest, and responsible.

b. Life Skills Development

Through religious education, students are taught skills that are useful in everyday life, such as social skills, self-management, and leadership. The development of life skills is an important aspect of education and personal development that helps individuals to function effectively in everyday life. By integrating life skills into the educational curriculum and providing opportunities for experiential learning, we can equip young people with the skills necessary to face challenges and achieve success in various aspects of life.

c. Increasing Spiritual Awareness

Spiritual awareness is an important process in the lives of individuals and societies. Spiritual awareness can be defined as a deep understanding and appreciation of oneself, relationships with others, and connection to something greater, such as God or the universe. Here are some important aspects of increasing spiritual awareness:

1. Definition of Spiritual Awareness

Spiritual awareness involves understanding the meaning of life, purpose, and values that underlie one's actions. It includes self-reflection, empathy, and a harmonious relationship with the environment.

2. Benefits of Increasing Spiritual Awareness

Improve mental and emotional health, reduce stress, and enhance overall well-being. Help individuals better cope with life's challenges and find meaning in difficult experiences. Promote better social relationships and increase empathy for others. Islamic religious education also aims to increase students' spiritual awareness, so that they can live their lives with strong religious values.

Building Character Through Islamic Values

Building good character is one of the main goals of Islamic education. Islamic values provide clear guidelines for shaping the personality of individuals with noble morals. The Islamic education curriculum teaches various values that can shape students' character. Some important values taught include: (Atfal, et.al., 2023), first, honesty. Honesty is one of the main values in Islamic teachings. In everyday life, students are taught to always speak and act honestly. Honesty builds trust and integrity, which are very important in social relationships. Islamic education emphasizes the importance of honesty and truth in all areas of life (Sari & Haris, 2023).

Second, discipline. Discipline is a value taught through religious practices, such as prayer and fasting. Students learn to value time and be responsible for the tasks given. Discipline helps students manage their time and achieve their goals. Third, Responsibility. Islamic religious education emphasizes the importance of responsibility, both towards themselves, their families, and society. Students are taught to be responsible for the actions and decisions they take, so that they can become reliable individuals. Fourth, empathy and tolerance. Through Islamic teachings, students are taught to have empathy for others and an attitude of tolerance towards differences. This is very important in building a harmonious and peaceful society.

Life Skills Taught in the Curriculum

The Islamic religious education curriculum can also teach useful life skills for students. Some skills that can be developed include: first, Social Skills. Social skills are a person's ability to interact and communicate with others effectively in various situations. These skills include the ability to understand other people's feelings, adapt to the social environment, and form healthy relationships. For children, social skills are very important in supporting their cognitive and emotional development.

Social skills encompass various aspects of interpersonal skills that enable a person to interact effectively with others. These skills include aspects such as empathy, emotional management, speaking and

listening skills, and conflict resolution skills. Children who have good social skills will be more adaptable to their social environment, whether at home, school, or in the community.

Social skills also help children understand the rules that exist in their social environment. For example, children will learn how to take turns when playing, respect the opinions of others, and control their emotions when faced with challenges. Through group activities and discussions, students learn to interact with others, work together, and respect the opinions of others. These social skills are very important in building good relationships in society.

Second, Critical Thinking Skills. Critical thinking is one of the important goals of education. The skills expected in the learning process are critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is thinking rationally (reasonably). There are various definitions of critical thinking according to experts. According to Matindas in Zubaidah (2010: 2-3) states that "*Critical thinking is a mental activity carried out to evaluate the truth of a statement. Generally, the evaluation ends with a decision to accept, deny, or doubt the truth of the statement in question*". Thinking is an activity that involves the process of manipulating and changing information in memory. When thinking, we think to form a concept, consideration, critical thinking, making decisions, thinking creatively and solving problems.

The purpose of critical thinking is to test an opinion or idea, including making considerations or thoughts based on the opinion put forward. "These considerations are usually supported by accountable criteria. Critical thinking skills can encourage students to come up with new ideas or thoughts about problems in the world. Students will be trained how to select various opinions, so that they can distinguish between relevant and irrelevant opinions, and between true and false opinions. Can help students draw conclusions by considering data and facts that occur in the field. The aspects measured in critical thinking skills are the cognitive domain at the analysis (C4) and evaluation (C5) levels. Islamic religious education encourages students to think critically and analytically about various issues, both related to religion and everyday life. These skills help students make wise decisions (Anggitasari & Widyaningrum, 2021).

Third, Self-Management Skills. Self-management is a process by which a person can organize and manage themselves in order to achieve short-term and long-term goals. Self-management includes the ability to manage time, identify goals, analyze problems, improve adaptability and manage themselves effectively. This self-management is very important to achieve because it allows a person to achieve predetermined goals, increase productivity, develop strengths and find self-satisfaction.

Thus, self-management is very important to improve education because it helps students to improve their academic performance. This can be done by identifying educational goals, managing time effectively, improving learning abilities, increasing adaptation and motivation, and building self-confidence. By improving self-management, students can achieve more educational goals in the long run. Students are taught to manage emotions and stress and make wise decisions in facing various challenges. These self-management skills are important for the mental health and well-being of individuals (Fadilah, et.al., 2023).

Effective Curriculum Implementation

The curriculum is a guideline for educators in teaching to achieve learning objectives. Education takes place throughout life, which is always changing, according to demands and needs, one of which is the progress and development of science and technology, which requires a highway of thinking. The curriculum in Indonesia has continuously changed, since 1947 until now. In 1947, a national curriculum was implemented for all levels of education which required them to follow the curriculum, then the curriculum was refined in 2004 using a competency-based curriculum, in 2006 a curriculum based on the level of education units (KTSP) was used, while in 2013 the K-13 curriculum was used which experienced changes in the content standards. Changes occurred again in 2018 to 2022, there was a total renewal with the name of the independent learning curriculum. This Independent Curriculum provides freedom to students to be active in learning, is student-centered, and develops the character reflected by students to be in accordance with the Pancasila profile (Nadhiroh & Anshori, 2023).

Curriculum Implementation is the implementation or application of a curriculum program that has been developed in the previous process, then tested by being implemented and managed, while adjusting field conditions and student characteristics, both emotional, physical, and intellectual development. In curriculum implementation, the implementation of what has been planned in the curriculum is required to be carried out with all one's heart and strong desire. Big problems will occur if

what is implemented is contrary to or deviates from what has been designed. Curriculum design and curriculum implementation are a system and form a straight line in their relationship, in the sense that implementation reflects the design. Therefore, educators and other field actors involved in the teaching and learning process are required to understand curriculum design properly and correctly (Sholihah, et.al., 2023).

To realize the concept of educational reform, one of the things that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology will do is to give teachers the freedom to teach at a level that suits their students through the Merdeka Belajar program. Thus, teachers can determine the appropriate curriculum level for their students. So far, students have been at the same level without considering whether the child's competence can adjust or not (Hattarina, et.al., 2022). For the Islamic religious education curriculum to run effectively, a holistic and integrative approach is needed. Some steps that can be taken include:

Teacher Training

1. Definition of Teacher Training

Teacher training is an important process to ensure educators have the skills, knowledge, and methods they need to teach effectively. There are several methods of teacher training that can be used, such as, one effective training method to improve teachers' teaching skills and pedagogical abilities is practicum training, which emphasizes direct experience and application of theory in real classroom settings. The following are some examples of practicum teacher training, such as:

- a) Teaching Simulation: Teachers practice teaching techniques in front of their peers. Realistic learning scenarios are simulated to practice various classroom situations. Teachers receive constructive feedback that helps them improve their teaching (Lanu, et.al., 2024).
- b) Case Studies: Various case studies from different subjects and grade levels are discussed. Teachers analyze difficult learning situations and find effective solutions. Their analysis helps teachers make the right pedagogical decisions.
- c) Classroom Observations: Teachers watch other experienced teachers teach in the classroom, focus on teaching methods, teacher-student interactions, and effective classroom management, and talk to the teachers they observe to gain a better understanding.
- d) Microteaching: Teachers teach briefly to a small group of teachers. The teacher's focus is on a specific teaching skill, such as classroom management or delivery of material. Teachers receive direct and specific feedback that helps them improve those aspects.
- e) Collaborative Learning: Teachers pair up and teach each other, playing the roles of teacher and student, and providing feedback and learning from each other.

Practical Activities

1. Understanding Practical Activities

Practical activities are activities designed to provide students with hands-on experience, allowing them to apply the theories they have learned in real contexts. These activities are very important in education because they help students develop skills, improve understanding, and prepare them for real-world challenges (Lanu, et.al., 2023).

2. Examples of Practical Activities

- In Education:
 - Laboratory work (e.g. science experiments)
 - Field activities (e.g., visits to museums or historical sites)
- In Religion
 - Worship (such as prayer, fasting and zakat)
 - Social activities (such as community service and religious studies)
- In the Environment:
 - Greening activities
 - Environmental cleaning

3. The Importance of Practical Activities

Practical activities have many benefits, including:

- Application of Theory: Helping individuals apply the theories they have learned in real situations.
- Skills Development: Enhance practical skills and experience.
- Active Learning: Encourage more active and participatory learning.
- Social Awareness: Raising awareness of social and environmental issues.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that Islamic values taught in religious education, such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility, are the foundation for the formation of strong character. In addition, religious education also teaches life skills that are very much needed in everyday life, such as social skills and critical thinking. The implementation of an effective Islamic religious education curriculum requires several efforts, including quality teacher training and practical activities that can help students apply religious values in everyday life. Overall, Islamic religious education is not only important for forming faithful individuals, but also for creating a better, more harmonious, and more peaceful society. In a broader context, Islamic religious education can make a significant contribution in overcoming various challenges faced by modern society, such as moral, social, and environmental problems.

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