Optimizing Programs at a State Madrasah Aliyah in Bandung to Strengthen High School Students’ Character Education

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ABSTRACT

The research is conducted to find out how the planning process of organizing the implementation and evaluation of character education strengthening throughout programs in madrasah education units. The role of the school’s stakeholder in designing character-based learning strategies means that a great nation is a nation that has character and has high competitiveness. Good values must be owned by a nation as a competency capital so as to be able to answer the challenges in the era of globalization. Strengthening the character of the nation is in line with the hope and commitment of the Indonesian president through the National Movement of Mental Revolution (GNRM). This commitment was followed up with the presidential decree no. 87 of 2017. This research was conducted at an Islamic-based senior high school (Madrasah Aliyah) in Bandung which has the concept of strengthening character education through two aspects, learning and extracurricular. This research is a qualitative case study which collected the data through observation studies, interviews, and documentation. For data analysis techniques, there are three steps namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusion/verification withdrawal. The results of the research found the planning of character education strengthening activities at this school in integrated self-development programs through the school curriculum. Meanwhile, the implementation of strengthening character education is implemented through habits of behaviour and transparency. Evaluation activities emphasize the assessment of students’ morals on the suitability of the program that has been planned.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Madrasah as an educational unit is faced with the challenge of innovating in teaching and learning activities. The role of madrasah in building the character of the nation by instilling religious values as part of the implementation of education in addition to the provision of general knowledge needs to be a concern. This happens because the implementation of madrasah education has encouraged education in Indonesia to grow bigger (Alawiyah, 2014). On the other hand, the challenges also come from the managerial system which impacts on the poor quality of education (Machali & Hidayat, 2016). This condition needs to be solved with solutions to increase the quality of Madrasah. This is because madrasah with high quality will have implications on the development of the students’ characters. Madrasah usually applies the character education through their regular programs both intra curricular and extracurricular activities.

In the time of covid 19 pandemic, character education strengthening programs found their own difficulties. However, under any circumstances character education programs must remain consistently carried out because the basis of character is to build students’ personality, become a distinctive differentiator from others. In line with this, Hasan & Firdaos (2017) argue that character is interpreted as a basic value that builds one’s personality, formed both because of the influence of heredity and environment, which distinguishes them from others, and is manifested with others in the attitudes and behavior of daily life. The head of Madrasah is the key to the success of Madrasah in making changes. In this case, the head of the Madrasah has roles and responsibilities as an education manager, education leader, education supervisor, and education administrator (Made, 2000).

Madrasah heads are required to have skills and responsibilities, have innovative strategies to run character education programs in Madrasah during the Covid 19 Pandemic to be more structured and adaptable. Responsibility is the basic foundation. As a result, schools and teachers must educate these values to produce ethically knowledgeable people and position themselves as part of a responsible society (Lickona, 2013). The benchmark of the success of education can be clearly known through numbers that show the cognitive abilities of learners. The better the number of repeat results or exams, learners are considered to be smarter and able to master a lesson in school well (Sulistyanto & Mundilarno, 2018).

There is some relevant research that discusses character education. For instance, research conducted by Marini (2017) mentions that the current condition causes difficulties in learning and in the formation of students’ characters. This statement is emphasized by Dahliana & Asep (2018). They revealed that there are still many educational institutions that have not been able to implement their students’ character education and manners education. Character education in Indonesia is still lacking. Educational institutions in Indonesia are still not optimal to introduce the concept of character education to learners. (Sofyana & Rozaq 2019). Characters that do not develop well will result in rampant character degradation that occurs among students. Theoretically, there are five special character education strengthening programs that are applied including: (1) religious values (2) independent; (3) nationalists; (4) integrity; (5) gotong royong. The program is implemented in two aspects, the learning process and extracurricular. (Kemdikbud, 2017).

This recent research is different from previous studies. It did not focus on presenting problems that occur in character education studies, but it focused on character education strengthening management in teaching and learning activities organized by educational institutions especially in a Madrasah. The research question covers several elements including planning, organizing, implementing (actuating), and evaluating (controlling). Character education in this study tries to directly look at environmental conditions with the aim of obtaining accurate data. The ineffectiveness of teaching and learning activities that result in a decrease of critical power, problem solving and
changes in nature might cause the loss of character of learners. A student should have conceptual and contextual knowledge also able to solve problems in order to be able to become a generation that is ready to compete. By conducting this study, it is expected that Madrasah will be persistent in upgrading their quality to support the existing programs that strengthen students’ character education. Moreover, all the parties that are involved in this effort such as teachers and parents must also be supportive to realize the programs.

2. METHODS

The research used a qualitative method because this is an attempt of understanding the phenomena about what is experienced by the subject of research such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and so on, holistically and by way of description in the form of words and language. Moreover, this also tries to specify the context that is natural by utilizing it in a natural setting (Moleong, 2014). The data collection techniques in this study are observation, interview, and documentation. Data collection techniques are expected to be a valid consideration in obtaining information about character education strengthening programs at a Madrasah Aliyah in Bandung. The analysis of this research data is based on descriptive principles. As cited by Sukardi (2009), researchers collect, reduce, present, and draw conclusions from the data. The stages were conducted based on the fundamental method relied on by qualitative researchers. For gathering information, they concern themselves with participation in the setting, direct observation, in-depth interview, and document review. Scientists can only work based on data, namely facts about the world of reality obtained from observation (Fadli, 2021). For the interview, the researchers took the Head of the school as the participant. This female headmaster was willing to participate in this study voluntarily. Moreover, for the documentation, a number of documents from the school were screenshot to provide evidence about the running programs. Lastly, for the observation, the researchers had a classroom seat in to investigate the programs implementation and effectiveness in the school.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research setting is an institution engaged in education which has a vision of madrasah excels in academic achievement and Islamic character building. As evidence, the following statement was revealed by the Head of the school,

“This school has efforts in achieving educational goals for students poured in the mission of the school, namely: (1) Carrying out education and learning in a good and quality manner; (2) Developing all the potential possessed effectively and efficiently; and (3) Carrying out intensive faith and piety construction.”

As an effort, the school provides a strategy to turn back the students’ character by making the Quran and Sunnah as the foundation of education as well as the main legal source used in making policy. For Islamic educational institutions, to survive and be able to respond to the needs of society at every age, a strategy of improving quality and effective measurement is a must have planning. The strategy basically relies on the ability to improve and formulate its vision for every age as outlined in the formulation of obvious educational goals (Luneto, 2014).

3.1. Management in Madrasah on Strengthening Character Education

This section explained the management functions of Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Evaluation/Supervision (Controlling) at the school in character education strengthening program activities during the Covid 19 Pandemic. The implementation of learning activities at that school also provided government instructions of the Indonesian Minister of Education Circular Letter No. 4 of 2020 and Circular Letter of the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Education No. 15 of 2020, then, as a form of substitute for classical learning that has been carried out in schools. Learning is transferred to the
house or referred to as learning from home (BDR) both online mode and offline mode (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020).

3.1.1. Planning Stage

The school has mandated the teachers to carry out systematic activities in preparing Learning Implementation Plans (RPP). Efforts in implementing the values of strengthening character education (Religious, Independent, Nationalist, Integrity, and mutual cooperation) are implemented through Learning activities and Extracurricular activities. Teaching and learning process in that school definitely follows government instructions with Online and Offline systems (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). Among them are planning activities, consisting of determining goals, materials, facilities, schedule, teaching/teachers/facilitators, implementation strategies, evaluation to facilitate the implementation of character education strengthening programs in Madrasah during Covid 19.

The utilization of character values in the planning stage at this school is in line with Irawati’s opinion (2019) mentioning that character education is a comprehensive effort for humans to understand and care to behave in accordance with basic ethical values. Therefore, the object of character education is value. Those values can go through the internalization of what is known that requires long-term planning and proper strategy. The efforts made by all Madrasah Aliyah in Bandung stakeholders in planning this character strengthening education program began with communication and discussion with the aim of obtaining useful solutions in policies that must be made in the face of the challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic. Among them is designing a learning system in the form of Guidance on Online-Based Education and Learning Activities in the school (2020/2021):

![Fig. 1 Learning Guidebook](image)

The above guidebook becomes one of the habituation-based learning directors. As revealed by the head of the madrassa and the expert staff of the curriculum in interview activities, the most important activities in strengthening the students’ character are transparency and habituation. Therefore, the communication between stakeholders planned through the above guidelines becomes an innovation in education planning at this school as an effort to improve the character of students in the habituation of learning. This is because every human being is created to learn. Anywhere under any circumstances, human resources are adaptable. In line with the journal Maria & Sedyono (2017), management in learning activities is a pattern of interaction and communication between teachers and students with a view to acquiring knowledge, attitudes, skills, or digging into what is learned.

Strengthening habituation-based character education remains in place with reference to the schedule that has been compiled by the Madrasah. This prioritizes time management activities during covid 19 in the learning program at home. This is evident from the schedule of reading al-Quran, fasting, sunnah prayer, and other worship. It can be seen in the picture below.
With the learning planning in the form of habituation as outlined in the Guidebook during the home study, the school also cooperates with parents of students to supervise student learning activities during home learning. Habituation activities need to always be emphasized because they form the mindset and character of children indirectly by placing them in the same position every day or many times. This is what makes the government continue to strive for activities related to character education and convey appeals to all educational institutions including Madrasah Aliyah (Thahir et al., 2020).

3.1.2. Organizing Stage

The division of responsibility, authorization and accountability at the school reflects that every institution stakeholder has responsibilities that must be completed. In this realm, namely, the Principal, Education personnel, Teacher’s, and Students have a very important role in the continuity of the character education strengthening program. Here is the organizational structure of the school.
This is in line with the opinion of Lewis & Ponzio (2016) who argued that given the tight connection between best practice instruction for academic expertise and for moral development, teachers are unwittingly engaged in character education when they structure lessons and organize classrooms in ways that optimally support student learning. Secondly, organizing in strengthening character education in school is done with four things. First, the conditioning is done with the division of duties and responsibilities for all school residents in strengthening character education. Second, organizing is carried out by coordination and communication between the executor and the task person. Third, organizing is done by developing the quality of human resources, namely teachers and education personnel in schools. Fourth, organizing is done by organizing facilities and infrastructure resources (Panoyo et al., 2020).

3.1.3. Actuating Stage

In the implementation of character education strengthening programs, the school made the implementation through intra curricular and extracurricular activities. It is also expressed by the head of the Madrasah as a leader that this character education requires discipline, perseverance and the important thing is transparency (Komariah & Kurniadi, 2017). During the pandemic period, it is a challenge for the school in implementing character education strengthening programs, because learning activities become one of the aspects that reflect many character values. Not only students, teachers also have obstacles in planting character values based on examples (Prasetia & Najiyah, 2021).

Efforts made by the school are digitization of learning systems using WEB, social media, and also cannot be separated from the role of parents who supervise students at home. As revealed from the results of interviews and documentation, that in learning, the school has WEB or digital learning named digimax as shown below.

![DIGIMAX at the School](image)

Learning Management system Digimax is an effort of the school to carry out effective learning activities. All access to learning is applied to it. This is in line with previous research revealed by Astini (2020) who stated that in carrying out online learning, a variety of applications to connect students with teachers such as e-learning, WhatsApp group, google meet, google classroom, zoom and other similar applications. This opinion also proves the efforts made by the school in dealing with the Covid 19 pandemic. It is presenting solutions from learning. Not only that, the implementation of character
education strengthening program planting activities is carried out through daily habituation activities that are controlled through the cooperation of parents and teachers who are connected through mobile phones via WhatsApp and also reports of student activities in the form of technical week reports.

Character values include religious, nationalism, integrity, independence, and mutual cooperation. It is worked out through the strategy of exemplary and habituation. Before the covid 19 pandemic was present, the implementation of the values of strengthening character education in that school can be organized and carried out in accordance with the vision of the Madrasah mission. However, pandemic is not a reason to stop and is not a severe enough obstacle for the school in the implementation of the character education program. With the cooperation and management of students, activities through the guidance of teachers and supportive parents, it is easier to achieve effective and efficient goals.

The value of this religious character is reflected in the habituation of performing religious activities such as the Quran, Salat Dhuha, fasting sunnah, and others. This is evidenced by the documentation about the schedule of student activities during home learning, as follows.

![Fig. 5 Schedule of Students’ Activities](image)

The value of the nationalist character is reflected in the mandatory program to memorize the national anthem of the State of Indonesia, such as the INDONESIA RAYA song which is done before learning activities begin. Not only the national anthem, the students at that school are also required to memorize regional songs, such as halo-halo Bandung songs and others. At the time of the Covid 19 pandemics, the programs were still done through online learning activities. This is an attitude to appreciate the richness of local culture, the realization of the love of the homeland, maintaining the environment, and discipline (Elihami, 2018). Integrity values are reflected in students’ discipline, active in social, honesty and consistent in acting and saying.

A person with high integrity has the characteristics of being able to appreciate the dignity of individuals, as well as care for others, the environment, moreover in this Covid 19 pandemic period. Concerning others is a very important state that must be owned by humans, especially students in Madrasah. Independent value is one of the aspects that must be possessed in the face of learning in the time of the covid-19 pandemic. The school in this case had the cultivation of independent character values through activities carried out by students during learning at home. Mutual cooperation values contained in students and stakeholders are upholding a sense of respect, cooperation, inclusiveness, and having a strong sense of brotherhood (Silalahi & Hutauruk, 2020). A deeply held commitment must be recalled to the real thing. The efforts made by the school towards this value are more about planting
attitude through consistent interaction, so as to help each other. In the pandemic period, teachers instructed students to be more attentive to the environment by cleaning the yard of a private house, using homework, and being active in social activities. This is reflected in the documentation of the students below.

Fig. 6 Students’ Activities during learning from home

3.1.4. Controlling Stage

The school in this case had evaluation activities from starting to make planning during the Covid 19 pandemic by involving school stakeholders, such as education personnel, teachers, and school residents. This evaluation activity is carried out by the principal of the education personnel. Teachers conducted instruction to outside parties. In this case, the teacher to students and parents of students as guardians of teachers when students study at home. Surveillance or controlling activities are also meant as a matter of evaluation. This evaluation activity can be done with four components. First, supervision of strengthening character education is carried out by the internal school, namely the supervision of the principal on school residents in performance, and teacher exposure to students in the learning process. Second, supervision of strengthening character education is carried out by stakeholders consisting of school committees, school supervisors, and education agencies. Third, supervision of strengthening character education involves the role of the family as an informal level of education. Fourth, supervision of strengthening character education involves the community, both the community around the school and the community around the house where they live (Panoyo et al., 2020).

Teachers’ activities in evaluating/controlling students during the Covid 19 pandemic at the school in the field of research were in the form of assignment and learning. It is depicted in the picture below.
In line with the journal of Utami et al. (2021), the evaluation activity can be interpreted as a way to overcome problems that occur between individuals within an organization. However, the existing problems can be used as the learning process and evaluation for each individual and organization in the future. Control is one of the management functions that seeks to conduct assessments, make corrections to everything that has been done by subordinates so that it can be directed to the right path in accordance with the objectives. Supervision is researching and supervising so that all tasks are carried out properly and in accordance with existing regulations or in accordance with each personal job description (Maujud, 2018). These activities become a regular control to evaluate the success of character-building programs during the pandemic.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, it can be concluded that the planting of strengthening character education in the unit of education especially madrasah should be the main program in facing the development and changing times. The school in the case study upholds the program of strengthening character education with the concept of transparency and habituation as a program implementation strategy. Management strengthens character education at the school followed by the management function and implementation starting from Planning, Organizing Actuating Controlling (POAC). Activities determine the purpose and division of responsibility up to the policy that is chosen using the Learning Implementation Plan in the form of a Guidebook of students' activities during home study activities. The implementation of character education strengthening programs are implemented in learning and extracurricular religious, nationalist, integrity, independence, and mutual cooperation. Evaluation of management of strengthening education is implemented through analytical and review activities in the program that is carried out. Future studies are encouraged to investigate further about the better practice of character education after the pandemic situation. This is important because students need to re-adjust the learning habits after quite a long learning from home (BDR).

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