

# Strengthening Character Education In Elementary Schools: Learning Technology In School Culture

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**Abstract:** Character education in schools has a very strong relationship with the culture of the school. School culture is an instrument that strongly supports the capacity of education to build the character of students as an effort to achieve national education goals. This study aims to describe and analyze, and compare models of strengthening character education and its achievements through school culture in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah Tegal city; and supporting factors and obstacles in strengthening character education through school culture. The study was conducted with a naturalistic inquiry approach. Subjects in this study were principals, teachers, students, parents of students at SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah Tegal city. The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling technique. The object of this research is the social situation in the school including the place, actors and activities carried out by the principal, teachers, students, parents of students, and places or spaces in the school. Data were collected using participant observation methods, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The main instrument is the researcher himself. Data validity test is done by triangulation techniques. The data analysis technique used qualitative analysis by adapting the interactive model of Miles & Huberman (2014).

**Keywords:** school culture, strengthening character education.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Education is simply an effort to shape human personality according to the cultural values. Samho (2013: 75) states education, as a guide in the life of growing children, leads all-natural forces that exist in children so that they, as humans and members of the society, can achieve the highest level of safety and happiness. Education experiences development or dynamics in society by remaining based on the moral values of Pancasila as the nation's noble values. The unity of moral values is a reflection of the nation's character. The application of the nation's character values is carried out through character education. Kurniasih and Sani (2017: 7) state that character education is a system of inculcating character values to school members including knowledge, awareness, actions to implement these values all of which through methods of habituation, model and teaching so that they are embedded in the minds of students. Character is a set of personal values which guides behaviour. The term of 'character education' is used in the same meaning as moral education when it refers to (explicit or implicit) teaching of values which contribute to personal and social well being (Arthur, 2011). Through character education, the nation's character is expected to become strong. Indonesia is expected to become a nation that is able to compete with other nations in the world, especially in the nowadays era of globalization with various phenomena that occur in society, including in the lives of elementary school-age children. Character education is very important to be developed in elementary school. According to Havighurst in Hurlock

(1980), elementary school children are 6-12 years old, with the characteristics of 1) building healthy behaviour, 2) learn the physical skills needed for extraordinary games, 3) learn to get along with peers, 4) learning social roles related to masculinity and femininity, 5) develop basic skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic, 6) develop concepts needed in daily life, 7) building morality, conscience, and values, 8) achievement of independence, 9) building behavior in social groups and institutions (schools). Character education today is a serious problem and needs attention. The shift in character values which leads to dishonourable behaviour is more visible in social life. Various phenomena involve elementary school children, namely social deviation, crime, brawl, bullying, liquor, drugs. They are poor behaviours and are the responsibility of schools, families, communities, as well as social media to overcome them. This shows that today society life, including school life, faces a crisis of character. Agustian (2008: 8) explained that there were seven moral crises in Indonesian society, namely: 1) crisis of honesty, 2) crisis of responsibility, 3) don't think far ahead, 4) disciplinary crisis, 5) togetherness crisis, 6) crisis of justice, 7) crisis of concern. The formation of the character of students at school can be done through school culture; forming children in a better and positive nature. Related to the importance of strengthening character education through school culture, SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah Tegal city have specific ways. However, both of them have fundamental differences in their vision and mission and are also different in the school development paradigm.

## 2 METHODS

This research used descriptive qualitative research, in which the researcher describes a phenomenon or condition that is actually experienced by the research subject. The researcher describes the data about strengthening character education through the school culture of fifth grade students of SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah Tegal city, models, and supporting factors and constraints. The study was conducted at 1) SDIT BIAS Assalam, situated at Dadali Street Number 12, Randugunting village, Tegal city and 2) SDIT Usamah, situated at Surabayan Street RT 01/XIV, Panggung village, Tegal city. The reason is that

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there are still many pure values in both schools which illustrate the strengthening of character education through school culture in planning, implementing, and activities in schools. The subjects of the research were the principal, grade 5 teachers, several grade V students of SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah Tegal city with consideration of the suitability between what would be examined with the informants. The research subject was determined by purposive sampling technique, which is taking data sources in accordance with certain considerations from researchers; and snowball sampling, which is taking data sources that were initially small in number and gradually larger. The object of research is the social situation in the school (place, actor, activity of the principal, teacher, student, place or space in the school). Data collection techniques are 1) observation, i.e. observing the behavior of principals, teachers, students, and observations of student activities at school; 2) interviews, i.e. collect data directly from informants conducted in depth and thoroughly to obtain information; 3) documentation, i.e. looking at documents which is relevant with research. The validity of the data is done by confirmation, both the results of observations, the results of interviews with informants, as well as confirmation with the results of the interview. Data reliability testing is done in three ways. First, an extension of the observation is carried out if the data is not adequate and not reliable, if all the research problem formulations have not been answered or are still not consistent. Data retrieval process will be stopped, if the data is sufficient and reliable. Second, perseverance, more careful and continuous observation is improved. Third, data triangulation is done by (a) technical triangulation, namely interviews, observation, and documentation; (b) triangulation of data sources, i.e. checking data obtained from several sources by conducting more interviews with school principals, teachers, students and parents of students to obtain valid data; (c) time triangulation, which is carried out on various occasions, i.e. morning, afternoon and evening (conducive time); and (d) negative case analysis. Negative case analysis is done by looking for data that is different or contrary to the research findings. The method is (1) checking by members, i.e. discussing the results of research with data sources; (2) using supporting references to prove the data that has been found: records / tape recorder, documents relating to the object under study, some relevant artifacts, school rules / regulations that have been documented. Data analysis techniques include 1) data reduction, namely the process of selecting, focusing on simplifying, abstracting, and transforming "rough" data that arises from various written records in the field; 2) presentation of data from a set of information to provide the possibility of drawing conclusions<sup>3</sup> and taking action; and 3) drawing conclusions / verification, which starts from searching for the meaning of objects, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions. Conclusions are made loosely, openly, skeptically, at first unclear, then increased to become more detailed, rooted, and sturdy.

#### **Model of Character Education Strengthening through School Culture in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah**

Model of character education strengthening through school culture in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah are needed to maximize the achievements of character education in accordance with national education goals. School culture plays a major role in strengthening character education as an effort to improve the quality of national education. School culture is an atmosphere of school life where students interact with fellow students, teachers, education staff, and among members of school community groups. The interaction is bound by various values, morals, rules, norms and ethics which are applied in schools. The development of the values of character education through school culture includes a variety of activities carried out by academics, namely the principal, teachers, education staff when communicating with students. The results of the study show that strengthening character education through school culture in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah Tegal city have similarities and differences. This is due to the fact that the format of the curriculum materials for learning and character education has in fact been designed and compiled by the Department of Education to be implemented in all primary and public schools in Indonesia, taking into account the potential and characteristics of each school. The similarity model of character education strengthening can be seen from the implementation of each school's cultural program, emphasizing more on the aspects of habituation of students' daily behavior at school and the models of all school components such as school principals, teachers, and staff education. The school culture is almost the same, namely: habituation and pledge before and after the activity; habituation of reading & memorizing al-Quran, al Hadits, Asmaul Husna; duha prayer; duhur & asar prayer together on time; sunnah fasting on Mondays & Thursdays and recommended fasting on certain days (tarwiyah day, arofah, etc.); flag ceremony every Monday; habituation of maintaining cleanliness of the classroom & school environment; gardening. The following is a picture of praying before and after the activity at SDIT BIAS Assalam. Models of strengthening character through school culture at SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah include: 1) routine activities; 2) programmed activities; 3) community involvement; 4) excellent programs; 5) the model of adults; 6) consider school norms and traditions; 7) providing motivation, advice, understanding and appreciation; 8) giving affective messages. The practices in both schools are different. The differences are due to the capacity, competence, and creativity of teachers in developing character education through school culture by including the character content in school programs. These conditions make different characters of students. Routine activity program includes the main values of character - religiosity, nationality, independence, mutual cooperation, integrity - in every school activity. The routine activity program at SDIT BIAS Assalam is different from at SDIT Usamah Tegal. SDIT BIAS Assalam applies for routine activity programs in the formation of attitudes and behaviours that characterize students based on the main character values. Teachers are required to carry out coaching on an ongoing basis until the formation of character behaviour becomes habituation and life culture. As revealed by Gaffar in Kesuma (2013: 5), character education is a process of transforming the values of life to be developed in one's personality. In SDIT Usamah, routine activities are applied as activities that are

carried out regularly, both in class and at school, such as praying together, Monday flag ceremony, praying before and after learning, tadarus and reading library books for 15 minutes, checking body hygiene and clothing before entering class, cleaning the class and yard before and after learning, carrying out a healthy Friday and a clean Friday by doing exercise and work together. These routine activities reinforce the values of religious character, nationalism, love to read, care for the environment, responsibility. According to Christopher (2006), the first difficulty faced by those who evaluates the impact of character education program originated from the nature of certain program goals. Wiyani (2018: 70) formulated that character education is a conscious and planned effort to instil character values in students through learning activities, talent and interest development, and habituation in the classroom and in the school environment so that students become individuals who have noble character. Programmed activities for strengthening character education are carried out by including the content of character education in learning - intracurricular, co-curricular, extracurricular, spontaneous activities, and role models - according to the plan designed by the teacher. The differences of programmed activities in SDIT BIAS Assalam and in SDIT Usamah are in terms of material and character weights which are integrated with each school activity. This is in accordance with the capacity of understanding, competence and creativity of teachers and academics in the delivery of strengthening character education through school culture. The community engagement model is a joint commitment of parents, school committees, other parties (alumni, community leaders, religious leaders, observers of education, entrepreneur) by integrating the main values of characters in planning and implementing school programs. The community engagement program in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah are realized through the cooperation and commitment of parents, school committees, other parties with the school in order to improve achievement, progress in learning, and character-building students. This collaboration encourages the formation of a community of parents who function as activists and supporter of the planning of academic achievement programs as well as student character achievements. The commitment of students' parents to schools in SDIT BIAS Assalam in the form of a good and constructive internal cooperation relationship can provide full support to the planning and implementation of character education strengthening programs. The positive impact of parents' commitment to efforts to improve school performance and progress that SDIT BIAS Assalam holds the status of an "impact school" launched on November 30, 2017. The character education of this school should give impact to 10 other schools in Tegal city. The community engagement model that produces an impact school program reinforces the value of the character of cooperation, respect for achievement, social care, responsibility. The community engagement program at SDIT Usamah was realized in "1821 Program", which was a collaboration and commitment of parents with the school began in the 2019-2020 school year from 18:00 to 21:00. The Excellent Program as a model for strengthening character education through school culture in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah has similarities as

well as differences, making it a characteristic of each of these schools. SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah provide students with strengthening the value of religious character in life in order to continue on to the next level of school both in Islamic boarding schools and other public schools. The excellent program activities of SDIT BIAS Assalam include boarding school activities, short boarding school, Muharram weekend, spiritual tourism, akhirussanah (year-end graduation), umrah for kids; and the implementation of the Adiwiyata program into school culture. The Adiwiyata program is a good and ideal school with all the knowledge and various norms and ethics that can be the basis for the creation of prosperity and the ideals of sustainable development. The Adiwiyata Program equips students with environmental insights into efforts to protect and manage the environment. The following is a picture of the implementation of Adiwiyata's activities in the form of catching catfish in ponds and planting hydroponic plants. The Excellent Program in SDIT Usamah is realized as the developing of the potential of learners so that it can be used to solve problems faced in particular career problems and equipped with training in the values of basic skills related to daily life. The excellent programs include MABIT, Quantum Ramadhan (Ramadhan pesantren activities, zakat fitrah), Role Play of Iedul Fitri Prayers, Sanlat (short boarding school). Other excellent programs include fun cooking, market day, ASMA (social service), FFD (Family Fun Day), parenting seminars, SIT in Action (annual seminar activities for parents and public). Models of adults for strengthening character education through school culture in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah are activities in the form of daily behavior by educators and education personnel who can be models for students, such as coming to school on time, doing prayers right time, neatly dressed, speak properly and correctly, appreciate the goodness or success of others, there is no difference in the provision of services according to the needs of each student, giving examples of non-violence, educational punishment. This model is used for strengthening the values of religious character, discipline, hard work, responsibility, democratic, communicative, social care. The application of the model in strengthening character education is in accordance with the opinion of Mulyasa (2014: 165) that character education can be applied in various ways, one of which is model. Mulyasa (2014: 170) also revealed that in the effectiveness and success of character education in schools, every teacher is required to have adequate personality competence. Commitment to school norms and traditions is a model of strengthening character education through school culture in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah, namely the awareness of the academic community - principals, teachers, students, education personnel - to their presence in the school on time as a form of their commitment to the prevailing tradition in school. The habit of coming on time is binding and becomes a part of him, so it does not make a burden. This commitment strengthens the value of the character of discipline, responsibility. School culture will build commitment and self-identification with certain values, norms, and habits. The prohibition of cheating in learning activities is a culture that is a shared commitment of teachers and students reinforcing the values of the character of self-confidence, independence, and responsibility. Hidayat (2010) stated that the construction of

the toughest school lies precisely in building this school culture, because besides requiring not a small amount of funds, it also requires endurance, patience, resilience, consistency, and consistency from all stakeholders in the school namely the principal, teachers, parents, community and government. Providing motivation, advice, understanding and appreciation is one of the components of the model in strengthening character education through school culture. Providing motivation by teachers both in learning activities inside and outside the classroom is expected to strengthen the value of characters not easily giving up, working hard, achievement appreciation and fond of reading. Giving advice by the teacher will strengthen the value of the character of independence and responsibility. Giving a good understanding of learning in the classroom or outside the classroom associated with daily life will strengthen the values of tolerance, curiosity, care for the environment, care for the social and responsibility. The giving of appreciation by the teacher to students such as giving praise both verbally and nonverbally will strengthen the value of the character values achievement and social care. The model of providing motivation, advice, understanding and appreciation is in line with Mulyasa's statement (2014: 66) about the teacher's task that conditioned a learning environment that is characteristically pleasing, and can arouse the curiosity of all students, the teacher uses the means of providing motivation, advice, understanding and appreciation. Giving affective messages in the school environment both in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah, such as written messages in the school environment is a place to convey information to the academics in the form of a moral message appeal. Affective messages that are written can indirectly influence the individual because they often see and read it so that there are appreciation and practice in daily habituation to improve student behaviour for the better. This is clearly stated by Suranto (2010: 14) that verbal communication between schools and school members is communication with the characteristic that the message sent is verbal or in the form of sentence expressions, both verbally and in writing. The messages are conveyed clearly and in accordance with local conditions and situations. The model of strengthening character education through school culture in SDIT Assalam and SDIT Usamah is basically identical to the results of research by Zuchdi et al. (2010: 11) which states that an effective model of character education in schools is to use a comprehensive integrated approach in various fields of study, using various methods such as incubation, model, value facilitation, and soft skills development accompanied by positive school culture development. Strengthening character education through school culture both in SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah is carried out through a variety of activities both intracurricular, co-curricular, or extracurricular, habituation and models that support the strengthening of character education through other school cultures.

#### **Factors supporting the strengthening of character education through school culture at SDIT BIAS Assalam**

The supporting factors for strengthening character education through school culture are getting a lot of support from various parties, such as dynamic teachers, work hard,

and want to learn; in the center of the city which has good, safe and Islamic community environment; cooperation with parents is well established; cooperating with the community, other schools, journalists, the entrepreneurs and universities; cooperating with NGOs / Non-Government Organizations; support from the Foundation both material and non material for all school programs; high-striving students to change and study hard. The obstacles of implementation of strengthening character education through school culture at SDIT BIAS Assalam are that academics personnel have not yet fully understand the concept of strengthening character education; facilities and infrastructure are not adequate enough – there is no mosque that can accommodate all academicians in carrying out the prayer; some communities or residents around the school are less concerned about school activities.

#### **Factors supporting the strengthening of character education through the school culture at SDIT Usamah**

The supporting factors of strengthening character education through the school culture at SDIT Usamah are that being supported by dynamic teachers, hard-working and willing to learn; situated in the center of the city which has a good, safe and Islamic community environment; good cooperation between parents; good cooperation with the community, other schools, journalists, the entrepreneurs; foundation support both material and non material for all school programs; high-striving students to change and study hard; adequate infrastructure such as the existence of a mosque with a capacity of 300 people. Strengthening character education through the school culture at SDIT Usamah also has constraints on implementation, such as the presence of some parents who are less able to collaborate with schools because of their busy times; the use of gadgets by students when at home so that it takes up study time.

#### **Implementation of Technology-Based Learning at SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah Tegal**

SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah Tegal implement technology-based learning. The use of information and communication technology media by teachers is quite good, as seen in conveying learning material using LCD media, as well as the internet. However, much guidance is still needed in finding media and learning resources from the internet so that teachers increase their competence in the use of ICT while at the same time be able to overcome their obstacles. According to Brian (2006), an effective method for delivering character education is problem solving moral and social situations represented visually as animated vignettes. However, schools are rarely able to use animated vignettes since existing tools do not allow them to be easily created and having them created externally is overly expensive.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

The model of strengthening character education at SDIT BIAS Assalam and SDIT Usamah Tegal refers to the guidelines for the preparation of the curriculum for implementing character education from the Education Office which was developed by considering the potential and characteristics of each school. This includes routine activities, programmed activities, community engagement, excellent programs, adult role models, taking into account

school norms and traditions, providing motivation and advice as well as giving affective messages.

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