

SOCIAL EDUCATION: BUILDING CHARACTER AND CARE IN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Social education is an integral part of the educational process that focuses on developing students' character and social awareness. Social education is key in shaping individuals who not only excel academically, but are also aware and concerned about social issues and have a strong character. The study conducted in this research uses the literature research method. The results show that; firstly, the integration of social values early on in the curriculum and school activities has a positive impact on students' behaviour and attitudes, enriches learning experiences, and instils a sense of social responsibility. Secondly, there are challenges such as difficulties in integrating the social education curriculum, the need for more intensive teacher training and barriers related to socio-economic and cultural diversity in the classroom. Thirdly, the effectiveness of social education largely depends on the quality and preparedness of teachers in designing and implementing a curriculum that includes a social component, as well as their ability to respond to the needs of diverse students. Social education requires students' active participation in projects and activities that promote empathy and social care. Inclusively and contextually designed curricula and adaptive teaching methods are proven to increase students' interest and participation in social learning.

Keywords: Social Education, Character, Society

Introduction

In this era of globalisation, the challenges faced by society are increasingly complex, ranging from social, economic, to political issues. Education is key in creating a society that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also rich in character values and social awareness.

Ironically, the focus of education today still tends to be on academic achievement alone, while character building and social awareness are often a lower

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priority. This condition raises concerns about the emergence of a generation that lacks empathy and does not care about their surroundings (Sitopu et al., 2024); (Guna et al., 2024); (Hairiyanto et al., 2024).

The emphasis on character and social education is important because it is through this education that moral values, ethics, and sensitivity to social issues can be instilled. Character and social education are important assets in shaping individuals who are responsible and contribute positively to society (Fepriyanti & Roqib, 2024).

Moral and social growth in society are two aspects that are closely related and influence each other. Moral growth refers to the development of values, norms, and beliefs that guide good and responsible individual behaviour in their social context (Sely et al., 2023). Morality that develops in society can be reflected in various principles, such as honesty, justice, empathy, and responsibility. When individuals in society apply these values in their daily lives, social interactions become more harmonious and mutually beneficial (Firdaus et al., 2024). Moral education that starts from home and school plays an important role in guiding individuals from an early age to internalise and practice these moral values (Dwiputra & Halimi, 2022).

On the other hand, social growth is concerned with how individuals interact and function in relationships with others. This includes the development of social skills such as communication, co-operation, and conflict resolution, as well as the ability to adapt to various social situations. Good moral development supports healthy social growth, as moral individuals tend to build positive relationships based on mutual trust and respect (Fadhila & Pandin, 2021). In addition, socially robust societies also provide a supportive environment for moral development, by providing examples of good behaviour and institutions that promote justice and shared well-being (DeRoche & Pariser, 2022). Therefore, balanced and integrated moral development and social growth are key to creating a vibrant and harmonious society.

Individuals who have strong character and high social awareness are better able to adapt to various life situations and have better interpersonal skills. This emphasises the importance of building character and caring as the foundation for personal and social success. However, many schools still face obstacles in integrating character and social education into the existing curriculum (Sulyati, 2020). Limited resources, teacher training and pressure to meet high academic standards are often barriers. In addition, increased access to information technology and social media also has the potential to have a negative impact on character building and caring if not matched with appropriate learning and guidance from the education environment (Shinta, 2024).

The phenomena of bullying, intolerance, and lack of empathy among adolescents and children are indications that social education and character building have not been optimised. These cases raise concerns and demand a rapid response from all elements of education (Supa'at & Muslim, 2023).

A society that does not have high social awareness has the potential to create an apathetic and individualistic environment. This contradicts the principles of communal life which should help and collaborate with each other (Puspitaningrum & Ismaniati, 2020).

Family environment factors also play an important role in social and character education. Parents need to strengthen their role in educating children about the importance of having good character and empathy for others (Budiyanto, 2021).

Social education and character building cannot be separated from the participation of communities and society in shaping a supportive environment. Social care is not only the responsibility of schools, but also the wider community. Investment in social education must also involve various parties, including the government, educational institutions, the private sector and community organisations, in order to create effective programs in building character and social care (Solissa, 2022).

Effective social education can produce future leaders who not only excel in their fields, but also have strong integrity and commitment to serve the community and contribute to better nation building (Pomalingo & Tangahu, 2023).

Curriculum changes and innovative learning methods should be developed to provide sufficient space for students to practice social and character values in their real life (Tubagus et al., 2023); (Aslan & Shiong, 2023).

Creating a school culture that supports character and social education through extracurricular activities, attitude development, and social projects is a step that can be taken to overcome the existing weaknesses (Kusnadi et al., 2023).

Therefore, there is a need for strong initiatives and cooperation from all parties to ensure that social education and character building become an integral part of our education system, resulting in a generation that is smart, has integrity and cares about its social environment.

Research Methods

The study conducted in this research uses the literature research method, which is a scientific approach used to collect, analyse, and synthesise pre-existing data from various written sources, such as books, journal articles, research reports, theses, dissertations, and other electronic documents. The purpose of literature research is to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular topic, identify trends, and build theoretical or conceptual studies based on existing literature. (Firman, 2018); (Jelahut, 2022); (Suyitno, 2021).

Results and Discussion

Social Education

Social education is a learning process that aims to prepare individuals to become responsible members of society, by developing the understanding and skills they need

to participate actively and effectively in social life (Harun et al., 2020). This education involves providing knowledge about the structure and dynamics of society, instilling values such as empathy, justice and respect for pluralism, and developing the ability to interact positively with others from different backgrounds and cultures (Aulia et al., 2023). Thus, social education has an important role in shaping character, strengthening social coherence and promoting democratic citizenship.

The main objective of social education is to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills and values necessary for competent and responsible participation in society. This includes building social awareness, an understanding of social, political and economic issues, and an appreciation of diversity and plurality (Bates, 2021). Through social education, individuals are expected to develop empathy and solidarity with others, as well as the ability to think critically and make ethical decisions. The aim is to create a more just, inclusive and democratic society by encouraging engaged, informed and responsible citizens (Nwachukwu & Azuka, 2024).

The principles of social education include respect for diversity, inclusiveness, equality and justice. The learning process is designed to encourage learners to be active, critical and reflective in questioning and exploring social, political and economic issues that affect their lives and their communities (Yusfasanti & Machfauzia, 2020). Social education encourages dialogue and cooperation, recognising the importance of different experiences and perspectives in building a harmonious society. Through a participatory and experiential approach to education, social education seeks to shape individuals who possess not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills to contribute to the solution of social problems and to become agents of positive change in society (Nugraha et al., 2021).

Character Building

Character building is a process of education and personal development that aims to build and strengthen moral and ethical qualities in individuals, such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect. This process involves more than just instilling moral values; it also includes developing the ability to make good decisions, overcome challenges, and interact with others in a positive and constructive manner (Adawiah, 2021). Through character education, individuals are directed to internalise these values so that they become part of the way they think, feel and act, with the aim of forming a strong character that will guide their behaviour throughout life. This process is crucial in educating the younger generation to become responsible and caring citizens, capable of contributing to society in a positive manner (Megiyono et al., 2024).

Effective character education models usually involve the integration of different approaches to instil ethical and moral values in students. One popular model is the holistic approach, which combines the formal curriculum with non-formal activities and informal learning. Within the classroom, character education can be integrated into

lessons through ethical discussions in the context of a particular subject, such as literature or social studies (Ramona & Supriatna, 2021). Outside the classroom, extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs and social services also provide opportunities for the application of character values in real situations. This character education is not only limited to the school environment, but also involves the family and community as an important part in the process of forming character values in children (Brunsdon & Layne, 2024).

Another model is value-based character education, which focuses more on instilling specific values that are considered fundamental by a society or culture. This model is often characterised by a systematic programme of teaching values such as integrity, persistence and respect. These methods may include, but are not limited to, hands-on education, storytelling, role-playing, and community service projects that allow students to practice and reflect on these values (Sulistiawati & Fauziah, 2023). This value-based model aims to create clear standards of what is considered good behaviour and is expected to inspire students to emulate those positive examples in their daily lives. If all these aspects rule in harmony, then character education can achieve its goal of shaping individuals who are not only academically smart, but also have strong moral strength and social awareness (Azzahra & Taqwani, 2024).

In conclusion, character education is a crucial aspect in the formation of responsible, empathic and ethical individuals. Two main models, namely the holistic approach and the values-based approach, offer effective strategies in instilling ethical and moral values. The holistic approach integrates character learning into various aspects of students' lives, including curriculum, extracurricular activities, and family and community involvement, while the values-based approach focuses more on teaching specific values that society deems important. Both have the same goal of forming individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also rich in moral and social values, so that they can contribute positively to society. The importance of character education therefore cannot be ignored, both in the formal education system and in the formation of values in the family and community environment.

Relationship between Social Education, Character Building, and Social Care

Social care is an awareness of and responsiveness to the welfare and needs of others in society. In this context, social care involves understanding and empathy for the situations and problems faced by other individuals or groups, as well as the desire to contribute positively to the resolution or improvement of these conditions (Pangestu & Sudrajat, 2020). Social care encompasses a range of actions, from simple ones such as helping a neighbour in distress, to more complex ones such as engaging in social programs or activities that aim to address broader social problems. In other words, social care is the foundation of altruistic behaviour, which shows a person's ability to

see the world from the perspective of others and take actions that consider the interests of others (Asnawi et al., 2021).

Aspects of social care can be divided into several main components, such as willingness to help, empathy, social responsibility, and active participation in social endeavours. Empathy, for example, is the ability to understand and feel what others feel, which is an important step in developing social care. Social responsibility leads to the recognition that each individual has a role to play in maintaining and improving the quality of life together in Society (Roper, 2020). Active participation reflects a concrete step of social care, where individuals are not only aware of social problems, but also take part in efforts to solve them. Through the development of these aspects in individuals, communities can work together more effectively in facing existing social challenges, strengthen the bonds of togetherness, and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all (Badeni & Saparahayuningsih, 2021).

Social education plays a fundamental role in character building and the development of social awareness. It refers to the process of teaching values, skills and knowledge that enable individuals to participate effectively and responsibly in society. Social education does not only focus on providing information but also emphasises fostering attitudes and behaviours that reflect concern for others and the community (Antara et al., 2024). This includes aspects such as empathy, fairness and co-operation. By integrating the concept of social education in the curriculum, schools play a role in developing the character of students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also sensitive to the needs and challenges faced by their surrounding environment (Ekasari & Nurkhairina, 2021).

Character education, as an integral part of social education, aims to mould students into ethical, responsible and caring individuals. The character is built through various activities both inside and outside the classroom that educate students about the importance of social values such as honesty, cooperation, and respect (Suyadi et al., 2021). This approach helps students internalise these values, which will influence the way they interact in society. Effective character education produces individuals who are not only academically prepared for their future, but also as active and empathetic members of society (Jannah, 2023).

Developing social awareness through education is another strategy often used in character education. Through activities such as community service, social projects and social problem simulations, students are invited to directly see and respond to the needs of others. These activities support the practice of empathy and increase social awareness, while students learn that their actions can have a significant positive impact on society (Harefa & Sitanggang, 2024). The social awareness built through this approach not only increases feelings of caring for others but also hones students' ability to think critically about social issues and how to address them.

Thus, social education and character building are closely intertwined in creating a foundation for the development of social care in students. Educational programmes that integrate character and social education prepare students to become responsible citizens who are sensitive to the issues around them. Through this holistic learning process, education is not just a transfer of knowledge but also the formation of individuals who care and actively take part in making positive social changes.

Constraints and Solutions in Social Education

One of the obstacles in social education is the limited integration of social education materials with other subjects at school. Often, the inculcation of social values and character is limited to extracurricular activities or special sessions that are not connected to academic materials. This can lead to the impression that social education is not an essential part of the curriculum, so students may not see its relevance in everyday life (Mulyadi et al., 2020). A solution to this problem could be to embrace an interdisciplinary approach to teaching, where social education concepts are applied and linked to other subjects. In this way, students can understand that social values are relevant and applicable in various contexts and fields of knowledge (Setiawati & Junining, 2021).

Secondly, teachers sometimes face difficulties in designing authentic and engaging learning experiences that promote students' social and character growth. A rigid curriculum and a focus on exam results can reduce time and resources for more creative and interactive social education activities. To address this, continuous teacher training is needed to develop more innovative learning methods (Maladerita et al., 2023). This training should include techniques for integrating social education in all aspects of learning as well as providing space for students to participate in community service projects or social initiatives that give them hands-on experience (Nurdiana et al., 2023).

Thirdly, social education is often faced with challenges in diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts. Students come from very different backgrounds, which can influence their perceptions and attitudes towards certain social values. This can create barriers in delivering consistent and accepting social messages across all student groups (Sarmila et al., 2023). The solution is to implement an adaptive and inclusive social education curriculum that respects and reflects student diversity. The programme should be tailored to take into account different experiences and perspectives, ensuring that social education is relevant and values the uniqueness of each individual (Handayani, 2023).

Fourth, there are practical constraints such as limited time and resources. Schools are often faced with pressure to meet academic targets so time to teach and practice social education is limited. In addition, schools may not have enough resources, such as teaching materials and training for teachers, to effectively implement social

education programmes (Dinda & Aman, 2020). To address this, schools can seek partnerships with non-profit organisations or the local community to acquire additional resources. In addition, schools can implement teaching strategies that integrate academic lessons with social development, allowing for more efficient use of class time (Sukesi et al., 2022).

In conclusion, obstacles to social education do exist, but with innovation, training and appropriate support for teachers and involvement of the wider community, social education practices can be strengthened, resulting in a positive and sustainable impact on students' character development and social awareness.

Conclusion

Social education is an important component in character building and social awareness in society, as it educates not only about academic knowledge, but also values and attitudes. Effective implementation of social education requires a holistic approach that integrates social values into all aspects of learning and school activities. This requires commitment from all relevant parties, including teachers, students, parents and the community, to create an environment conducive to social learning and character growth. The active involvement of students in community service projects and social initiatives, for example, provides opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in real-world situations, promote empathy and develop a sense of community responsibility.

Challenges in implementing social education, such as curriculum integration, teacher training, socio-economic and cultural diversity, and limited time and resources, require innovative and adaptive solutions. The importance of teacher training cannot be overlooked as teachers play a key role in delivering effective social education. Inclusive and adaptive curriculum development, which recognises and celebrates diversity in the classroom, is also essential to ensure that social education reaches all students. Resources from outside the school, including partnerships with non-profit organisations and the local community, can support the school's efforts in overcoming these resource limitations.

As such, social education has significant potential to strengthen students' character and compassion, making them better equipped to contribute positively to society. By addressing the constraints and implementing creative and inclusive solutions, social education can become more effective and impactful. The key to the successful implementation of social education lies in the collaboration between schools, families and communities, and the commitment to prepare young people who are not only academically smart, but also have good hearts and characters.

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