

Integration Of Character Education In Pkn Learning In Elementary School: Case Study Pesawaran Regency and Bandar Lampung City

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ABSTRACT

Character education plays an important role in supporting students' moral and social development at the elementary school level. This study examines the integration of character education into Civic Education (PKn), differences in teachers' approaches across grade levels, and the challenges encountered in its implementation. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collected through semi-structured interviews with three classroom teachers teaching Grades III, IV, and V at different elementary schools in Pesawaran Regency and Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. The findings indicate that teachers integrated character values into Civic Education by connecting learning materials with students' everyday experiences, modeling positive behavior, and establishing consistent classroom routines. The approaches varied across grade levels: Grade III emphasized imitation and direct habituation, Grade IV combined habituation with an understanding of underlying values, and Grade V placed greater emphasis on moral reasoning and the development of intrinsic awareness. The main challenges included inconsistencies in students' behavior associated with differences in family environments and concerns about gadget use. Teachers addressed these challenges through consistent role modeling, classroom-based habituation, and communication with parents. These findings highlight the importance of adapting character education practices to students' learning needs and strengthening collaboration between schools and families to support character development through Civic Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Education in elementary school is a crucial phase in the life span of an individual, because it is during this time that the foundation of a child's personality, character, and character is formed. Characters that are internalized from an early age will imprint and guide children's behavior until they reach adulthood. Therefore, educational institutions should not be just trapped in fulfilling the cognitive-academic aspect, but must balance it with the development of affective and psychomotor aspects through structured character education. Current social phenomena show a moral degradation among students, such as low discipline, a fading attitude of mutual respect, and a rampant neglect of individual responsibility.

These symptoms confirm that the strengthening of children's morality at the elementary school level is urgent to be improved in order to produce a generation that is intelligent and noble in character. Theoretically, character is defined as pure personal qualities that reflect a deep moral awareness, a strong desire to uphold virtues, and a real manifestation of positive behavior in daily life (Warsono, 2010).

This character development cannot occur in a vacuum, but must involve three integral psychological components, namely moral knowledge (knowing the good), moral feelings (loving/feeling the good), and moral actions (doing the good) (Marzuki, 2011; Lickona, 1991). These three components must be intervened simultaneously by teachers in schools through various instructional stimulation and conducive learning environments. One of the curricular facilities that is considered the most effective and has a substantial connection with the mission of shaping the nation's character is the subject of Civic Education (PKn). PKn carries out a dual mission, namely as a political-legal education (civic education) as well as a vehicle for value and moral education in the context of society.

Through PKn learning, students are given a basic understanding of norms, social rules, rights and obligations, as well as civilized interaction procedures according to the principles of diversity. Although PKn has conceptual advantages, the success of its implementation in the classroom is highly dependent on the teacher's pedagogical expertise in integrating these character values into meaningful learning activities. However, the facts on the ground show that teachers often face complex challenges in designing and implementing these character-building programs. The complexity of challenges increases along with the difference in the psychological characteristics of children at different grade levels, the heterogeneity of the parenting background at home, and the rapid flow of digitalization through gadgets. Considering this background, this study aims to dissect in depth the pattern of integration of character education in PKn learning at the elementary school level, analyzing the comparative approach based on variations at the grade level (grades III, IV).

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the integration of character education in elementary school settings. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews using a standardized interview guide. The use of a consistent interview instrument helped maintain alignment across participants' responses and facilitated comparisons of their experiences and perspectives.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling and consisted of three classroom teachers from three elementary schools in Lampung Province, Indonesia. They represented different grade levels to explore variations in teachers' approaches to character education across Grades III-V. The participants were Siti Nurul Faidah, a Grade III teacher at SDN 1 Karang Maritim in Bandar Lampung; Sebastianus Rino Setia Putra, S.Pd., a Grade IV teacher at SDN 14 Gedong Tataan in Pesawaran Regency; and Dwi Oviarani, S.Pd., a Grade V teacher at SDN 24 Negeri Katon in Pesawaran Regency. Face-to-face interviews were conducted at each participant's school.

The interviews focused on four main dimensions: (1) the importance of character education for children's social, emotional, and academic development; (2) the application of Thomas Lickona's three components of character education—moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action—in classroom practice; (3) pedagogical strategies for integrating character values into Civic Education (PKn); and (4) external challenges encountered by teachers and the strategies used to address them. The collected data were reduced, organized into thematic categories, and comparatively analyzed across the three grade levels. The findings were then examined in relation to relevant theoretical sources to support interpretation and the formulation of conclusions..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Importance of Character Education for Elementary School Students

Based on interviews with all participants, character education was consistently perceived as an essential component of children's development at the elementary school level. Teachers emphasized that character education serves not only as a foundation for moral development but also as a means of supporting students' social, emotional, and academic growth. This perspective highlights the importance of developing students' intellectual abilities alongside their moral values and everyday behavior.

In social and emotional contexts, character education is intended to support students in developing emotional regulation, self-confidence, and positive relationships with peers and teachers. Students are encouraged to demonstrate respectful communication, appropriate manners, and consideration for others. In academic settings, teachers associated discipline, independence, and responsibility with students' engagement in learning activities, including their willingness to complete assignments, maintain concentration, and participate in classroom activities. However, these relationships should be understood as teachers' observations and perceptions rather than evidence of a statistically significant correlation or a demonstrated causal effect.

The observed indicators of character development can be understood through four dimensions. The first is individual behavior, which includes punctuality, independence, and adherence to classroom routines. The second is social interaction, reflected in students' manners, mutual respect for teachers and peers, and appropriate communication. The third is learning performance, which includes responsibility for completing individual and group assignments, persistence, and concentration during learning activities. The fourth is collective skills, encompassing adaptation to new environments, teamwork, and social empathy. Together, these dimensions illustrate how character education is understood and practiced within the elementary school learning environment.

The Application of Thomas Lickona's Character Education Theory in Classroom Practice

The interviews indicated that the three teachers implemented practices consistent with Thomas Lickona's character education framework, although they did not necessarily use its theoretical terminology directly when teaching students. The teachers translated character education principles into classroom activities and daily interactions that were appropriate to students' learning needs. Lickona's framework comprises three interconnected components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These components provide a conceptual basis for understanding how students learn about moral values, develop an emotional commitment to those values, and put them into practice.

The first component, moral knowing, concerns students' understanding of right and wrong, fairness, responsibility, and the consequences of their actions. In classroom practice, teachers help students understand the reasons behind rules and social norms rather than simply requiring them to obey instructions. Discussions about appropriate behavior provide opportunities for students to consider why certain actions are beneficial and why other actions may violate shared expectations. This approach connects moral understanding with students' everyday experiences.

The second component, moral feeling, emphasizes the emotional dimensions of character development. Teachers seek to cultivate empathy, appreciation for positive behavior, and concern for others through encouragement, positive reinforcement, sincere appreciation, and reflection on the

consequences of students' actions. Through these practices, students are encouraged not only to recognize appropriate behavior but also to develop a personal appreciation for the values underlying it. Respect for classmates' opinions, for example, can be reinforced by helping students recognize how respectful interactions contribute to a supportive classroom environment.

The third component, moral action, concerns the application of moral understanding and feelings through observable behavior. Teachers encourage students to demonstrate honesty, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and respect in their everyday activities. These values are reinforced through consistent classroom routines and opportunities to practice appropriate behavior in different situations. In this sense, habituation provides a practical means of supporting the application of character values. The three components are conceptually interconnected: understanding moral values, committing to them, and practicing them are complementary dimensions of character education.

Integrating Character Values into Civic Education Learning

The integration of character education into Civic Education (PKn) is carried out by connecting curriculum content with students' everyday experiences. Rather than presenting civic concepts exclusively as textual information to be memorized, teachers contextualize learning materials through familiar situations at home, at school, and in the wider social environment. This approach provides opportunities for students to relate the concepts discussed in class to their own responsibilities, relationships, and behavior.

For example, when teaching about rules and social norms, teachers in Grades III and IV can encourage students to identify rules that they encounter in their daily lives, such as keeping the classroom clean, arranging personal belongings, and following classroom agreements. These activities help students understand the practical purposes of rules rather than merely memorizing their definitions. Similarly, learning about rights and obligations can be connected to students' responsibilities for completing individual assignments, contributing to group work, and respecting the rights of their classmates.

Several pedagogical strategies can support this integration. Group work provides opportunities for students to practice cooperation, tolerance, and shared responsibility. Discussions and question-and-answer activities encourage students to express their opinions honestly, listen to different perspectives, and respect disagreements. Role-playing activities allow students to explore social situations and consider the perspectives of others, thereby providing opportunities to develop empathy and appropriate interpersonal behavior. Through these approaches, Civic Education becomes a context for both understanding civic concepts and practicing the values associated with responsible participation in social life.

Differences in Character Education Approaches across Grade Levels

One of the main findings of this study is the variation in teachers' approaches to character education across Grades III, IV, and V. The teachers described differences in their instructional practices in accordance with their perceptions of students' learning needs and levels of maturity. These differences suggest a progression from an emphasis on direct modeling and habituation toward a greater focus on understanding values and moral reasoning. Nevertheless, the findings represent the practices of three teachers and should not be interpreted as establishing universal developmental stages or a fixed progression applicable to every child.

Grade III: Emphasis on Modeling and Direct Habituation. Siti Nurul Faidah, a teacher at SDN 1 Karang Maritim, Bandar Lampung, emphasized concrete examples and direct habituation when fostering character among Grade III students. At this level, teachers provide visible examples of appropriate behavior that students can observe and imitate. For instance, teachers demonstrate how to dispose of waste properly, communicate politely, and arrive on time for classroom activities. These practices make character values more accessible by presenting them through observable actions and repeated routines. Rather than relying primarily on abstract explanations, this approach emphasizes consistency between teachers' behavior and the values they seek to cultivate in students.

Grade IV: Combining Habituation with an Understanding of Values. Sebastianus Rino Setia Putra, S.Pd., a teacher at SDN 14 Gedong Tataan, Pesawaran Regency, described an approach that combines established routines with explanations of the underlying values. Students are encouraged not only to perform appropriate behaviors but also to understand why those behaviors matter. For example, when practicing queuing or participating in communal cleaning activities, teachers can explain how these behaviors contribute to fairness, shared responsibility, and collective comfort. This approach connects habituation with opportunities for students to develop a more explicit understanding of the social purposes of their actions.

Grade V: Emphasis on Moral Reasoning and Intrinsic Awareness. Dwi Oviarani, S.Pd., a teacher at SDN 24 Negeri Katon, Pesawaran Regency, emphasized moral reasoning and the development of students' awareness of the values underlying their behavior. At this level, teachers can encourage students to discuss real-life situations, examine the consequences of different choices, and reflect on the reasons for acting responsibly. Classroom discussions and moral dilemmas provide opportunities for students to consider different perspectives and explain their judgments. Habituation remains relevant, but it is complemented by reflection intended to help students understand the meaning of their actions rather than merely comply with rules or seek external rewards.

Taken together, the three teachers' accounts reveal differences in the emphasis placed on character education across the selected grade levels. Grade III practices prioritize modeling and direct habituation, Grade IV practices combine habituation with explanations of values, and Grade V practices place greater emphasis on reflection and moral reasoning. This pattern provides an illustrative account of differentiated teaching practices in the participating schools, rather than definitive evidence that students' moral development follows an identical sequence across grade levels.

Challenges in Implementing Character Education and Teachers' Responses

Despite the integration of character values into classroom activities, teachers face challenges associated with influences beyond the school environment. Two concerns identified in the analysis are inconsistencies between school and home environments and students' exposure to digital devices and content. These challenges highlight the importance of considering the broader contexts in which children learn and practice moral values.

The first challenge concerns differences between the expectations established at school and the practices experienced at home. Teachers may encourage discipline, politeness, and independence during school hours, but students may encounter different routines, expectations, or levels of support in their family environments. Such differences can make it more difficult to maintain consistent behavioral expectations across settings. In response, teachers emphasize communication and collaboration with parents. Classroom parent groups and digital communication channels can be used to share information about school routines, discuss students' development, and encourage parents to reinforce appropriate habits at home. This partnership can help align expectations between the school and family environments while recognizing that families may have different circumstances and needs.

The second challenge concerns students' exposure to digital devices and online content. Teachers express concern that insufficiently supervised gadget use may expose children to inappropriate content and may interfere with their concentration during learning activities. Digital technology can provide educational opportunities, but its contribution to students' development depends partly on how it is used and supervised. Teachers can therefore introduce age-appropriate digital literacy discussions during Civic Education lessons, establish clear expectations regarding gadget use in school, and communicate with parents about appropriate supervision at home. Parents may also consider using parental-control features where appropriate to help manage children's access to digital content.

Overall, these challenges demonstrate that character education cannot rely exclusively on classroom instruction. Consistent teacher modeling, repeated opportunities to practice positive behavior, communication with parents, and age-appropriate guidance on digital technology can

collectively support the implementation of character education. The findings emphasize the importance of collaboration between schools and families while acknowledging that the effectiveness of these strategies requires further investigation across broader educational contexts..

CONCLUSION

The integration of character education into Civic Education (PKn) in elementary schools contributes to students' emotional maturity, social adaptability, and motivation to learn. Character values are not taught solely as theoretical concepts but are integrated contextually into the learning process by connecting PKn materials with students' everyday experiences. This approach is reinforced through consistent habituation of virtuous behavior, enabling students to understand and practice character values in meaningful classroom and social contexts.

Teachers adapt their pedagogical approaches to students' developmental needs. In lower grades, character education emphasizes teacher role modeling, visual examples, and direct imitation, while in higher grades, it gradually incorporates deeper understanding of moral values and moral reasoning to foster students' intrinsic awareness. However, its implementation faces challenges arising from inconsistencies between family and school environments and the negative effects of gadget use. Addressing these challenges requires consistent teacher role modeling and strong collaboration between schools and parents to reinforce character development across learning and home environments.

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