Implementation of the Policy for Strengthening the Character Education of Formal Education Students in Bombana Regency

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Abstract

Character education is the key to improving student achievement. Students' accomplishments can make a name for themselves and increase the school's prestige. However, there are still many problems with students that can tarnish the school's name, family, and student's future. Therefore, character education policies are needed to shape students' character and behavior to become high-achieving and well-behaved people. This research aims to determine the description of character education policy practices at North Poleang 20 Junior High School. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type where data is obtained from interviews, observations, and supporting documents. This research shows that a character education policy for stakeholders creates the nation's next generation, which has good character and encourages increased students in education to carry out curricular and extracurricular activities at school. Character education policy has created intelligent students of good character. Environmental factors have influenced the implementation of character education policy. This policy has been implemented by involving the roles of parents, teachers, students, and the surrounding environment. This policy positively impacts student awareness and behavior even though there are still obstacles to the involvement of students' parents in understanding character education.

Keywords: *Implementation, Character Education Policy, Character Building Student*

1. Introduction

Education is crucial for developing self-competence in facing challenges in the digital era. Education serves as a means of transferring knowledge and, more broadly, as a process of cultural development, with the most important aspect being the formation of the nation's character and morality (Mini, 2017). The success of education is not solely measured by students' academic achievements but rather by the learning process that brings about changes in students' attitudes and behaviors (Siswinarti, 2017). The increasingly sophisticated development of digital technology is causing significant changes in the world. This technology is widely used in education because it facilitates easy and free access to information and the enjoyment of digital technology facilities. However, advances in digital technology pose challenges that impact character crises (Zakaria, 2021).

According to Sudarminta (Sudarminta, 2004), three social symptoms indicate that our nation still suffers from a moral crisis: (1) the rampant practice of KKN (corruption, collusion, and nepotism) in government bureaucracy and various aspects of societal life; (2) the weak sense of social responsibility among national leaders and public officials in general; and (3) the

lack of humanity among many of our citizens. As mentioned above, one indication of the loss of national character is Indonesia's high level of corruption. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) reported 149 suspected corruption cases in 2022, an increase of 34.23% from the previous year's 111 arrests. Disturbingly, these corrupt practices are not only carried out by officials or politicians but also by academics in the education sector, such as the Rector of Udayana University, who is a suspect in the corruption of new student independent selection fees for the 2018-2023 academic years, estimated to have caused state losses of Rp. 443.9 billion (Widi, 2023).

The phenomenon described above shows that despite the intellectual capabilities of those involved in corruption, they still engage in corrupt actions, which is related to a lack of character education. The character comprises universal human behavior values, including relationships with God, nature, and fellow humans, manifested through thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions. Character formation is influenced by both inherent factors (nature) and the environment (socialization or education - nurture) (Samrin, 2016). A lack of character education leads to a moral crisis, resulting in negative behavior in society, especially among teenagers (Fahdini et al., 2021), and character education is seen as a way to restore individuals' moral awareness (Yulianti, 2021).

Character education instills values aligned with the nation's culture, encompassing knowledge, attitudes, feelings, and actions (Muchtar & Suryani, 2019). Therefore, character education should be implemented as early as possible so that children can develop good character traits that will carry into adolescence and adulthood (Annisa et al., 2020). Character education also develops students' soft skills, preparing them to become high-quality, character-driven, and competitive human resources nationally and internationally (Khairiyah & Dewinda, 2022). The importance of character education has led the government to issue Presidential Regulation (Perpres) No. 87 of 2017 on Strengthening Character Education and Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2018 on Strengthening Character Education in Formal Education Units.

Implementing the Strengthening Character Education policy has already been applied in various schools. One such school is State Junior High School (SMP) 20 Poleang Utara, located in Poleang Utara District, Bombana Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. This school has implemented character education since 2018, with several programs based on school culture, as outlined in Article 6, Section B of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2018 on Strengthening Character Education in Formal Education Units. These programs include the habit of shaking hands with teachers when leaving school to instill respect, Quran literacy by reading Surah Yasin every Thursday (with non-Muslim students given their own space to read their respective holy books), the habit of performing Dhuhr prayer at school before leaving for Muslim students, and a class-based approach as regulated in Article 6, Section a of the same regulation, integrating character education through each subject. However, its implementation faces challenges.

The government's policy-making capacity needs consideration (Mukherjee et al., 2021). Government policies can significantly benefit the creation of human resources (Hendren & Sprung-Keyser, 2020). Various previous studies have examined the implementation of strengthening character education through pre-learning activities in Natural Sciences at SMP Negeri 12 Semarang (Rohmah & Pramesti, 2019), the implementation of religious character education at SMP Hikmah Teladan Bandung (Abdullah, 2020), class-based character education at SMP Negeri 2 Biak (Sarie, 2023), caring character education at SMP Negeri 1 Karangtengah Demak (Himmah, 2019), and character education within school culture at SMPN 8 Teluk Keramat, Sambas Regency (Gustiranda et al., 2022). Additionally, school teaching activities must be equipped with online learning to maximize the quality of education services for students (Zhang et al., 2020).

However, the previous research described has yet to reveal how the implementation of character education policy in a school is carried out comprehensively, whether through classroom subjects, school habituation programs, or extracurricular activities. Character education for students in Bombana Regency needs help with problems, such as the habit of shaking hands with teachers when leaving school. Many students need to heed this practice, making it a meaningless activity for them. They have not absorbed the values inherent in this habit, which has not become ingrained in their character or behavior. Similarly, the practice of performing Dhuhr prayer at school encounters issues. When it is time for the prayer, some students do not perform it. The researcher believes this may be because the habit of praying has yet to be internalized as a daily character trait. Students need to understand the obligation and purpose of the prayer fully. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct research that examines the comprehensive implementation of character education policies in schools, addressing classroom integration, school programs, and extracurricular activities. This research is crucial for understanding and resolving the challenges faced.

Implementing character values through each subject also needs to be addressed, such as the lack of teacher competence in integrating these values. Teachers tend to emphasize academic achievement, often neglecting character values. Additionally, teachers need more understanding and training on how to instill character values through the learning process. Furthermore, community leaders and parents need to be more involved in formulating the character education-strengthening program to be implemented. This leads to consistency between the values or habits taught in the family, community, and school environments. This issue is also present at State Junior High School 20 Poleang Utara. Dealing with these challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach to policy implementation. This approach should ensure alignment between academic goals and character education and foster collaboration between schools, families, and communities.

Regarding the policy process, Ripley and Franklin (2017) explain the stages of policy development: agenda setting, policy formulation and legitimation, policy implementation, performance implementation and policy impact, and new policy formulation. Similarly, Dunn (2015) outlines five policy processes: agenda setting, policy formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. Therefore, this research aims to uncover a school's character

education policy implementation comprehensively. This investigation is crucial given the numerous problems faced in its application. Anggara (2018b, p. 263) outlines four indicators of an ideal implementation process:

1.) Dreamed Policy, this represents the expected pattern of interaction to achieve policy goals. In the character education strengthening policy, the expected interaction involves teachers, schools, parents, students, and the community working together to strengthen students' good character, which is the policy's objective. 2.) Target Group, this refers to the subjects targeted by the policy and those expected to change. In the character education strengthening policy, the target is the students. 3.) Implementing Organization, the government bureaucracy unit is responsible for implementing the policy. In the character education strengthening policy, the implementing Organization, the school, plays a pivotal role in shaping the character of the future generation. 4.) Environmental Factors, these are elements in the environment that significantly influence policy implementation, including the family environment, school, community, and social media. Understanding and navigating these factors is crucial for effective policy implementation. By understanding these aspects, the research aims to reveal how the character education strengthening policy is implemented in a school setting and to address the issues hindering its effectiveness.

2. Methods

The problem-solving approach in this research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type (Taylor et al., 2015). The research location is SMP Negeri 20 North Poleang, Bombana Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is carried out by observing educational activities by the school in both classroom and extracurricular activities. Then, interviews were conducted by interviewing the school, students, and parents. Then, the research data is complemented by supporting documents obtained from school activities. They are determining informants using purposive sampling, namely selecting based on objectives and deemed to have the information needed by researchers to implement character education strengthening policies, including school principals, teachers, school committees, several parents, and several students. When the research was carried out, the author also tested the validity of the data using triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. Source triangulation is carried out by examining data obtained from various informants and selecting data whose answers are related. The author uses the triangulation technique to test data from observations, interviews, and documentation. Then, time tracking was done by interviewing the same informant with the same questions. Research data was analyzed using the opinion of Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014), namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

This character education is seen in terms of implementing public policy. Policy implementation is a stage in the policy cycle where the decisions taken are translated into concrete actions to achieve the policy objectives (Arafat, 2023). Policy implementation involves implementing programs, activities, and operational steps to achieve desired results. There are four indicators in the ideal implementation process (Anggara, 2018a), namely the envisioned policy, target group, implementing organization, and environmental factors. The following is an explanation of the policy for strengthening the character education of formal education students:

A. Dreamed Policy

About the expected interaction patterns to achieve policy goals. According to Boakes in Maunah (2016) states that in interaction, there are activities that are reciprocal based on mutual needs, activities from expressing feelings, motivation, and interactions, all of which are described in the form of behavior and actions in interaction can be seen to have a relationship to exchange knowledge, which is based on take and give. Each interaction is also determined by the time, situation, and interests that result from the interaction.

The interaction patterns in implementing strengthening character education at SMP Negeri 20 North Poleang can be seen through the interaction between the school, school committee, parents, and the community while preparing the character education strengthening program. Before delivering character education strengthening programs to parents through a committee meeting, the school made preparations, as stated by the principal at SMP Negeri 20 Poleang Utara, that the preparations were carried out at school before discussions with the parents regarding the programs. The program that will be implemented in the policy of strengthening character education first starts with a joint discussion regarding the basic policy for implementing PPK, namely Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 87 of 2017 concerning Strengthening Character Education and Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 20 of 2018 concerning Strengthening Character Education so that what they do is expected to be by existing regulations or policies. Then, the draft programs for strengthening character education that they mutually agree on will be presented during a meeting with the student's parents through a committee meeting.

In terms of interaction between the school and parents of students as well as committee administrators in the process of preparing the character education strengthening program, it was established through meetings held by the school committee; this shows that there is the involvement of parents of students and also school committee administrators in preparing programs. Strengthening character education, this is by the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2018 concerning Strengthening Character Education in article 5 paragraph 1, paragraph 4 and paragraph 5, namely: article 5 paragraph 1: PPK in formal education units is carried out by optimizing functions The tri-center educational partnership includes a) School, b) Family, and c) community. Article 5, paragraph 4: Community Optimizing the implementation of PPK by

families, as referred to in paragraph 1 letter b, is carried out through joint activities and family involvement in schools, homes, and the community environment. However, delivering information to students' parents is still not optimal because they need to learn what a character education-strengthening program is. The school needs to explain that the programs they will implement are part of character education. Then, there is still a need for more involvement of community leaders in meetings discussing programs to strengthen character education because the only people invited are parents. Community leaders should also be involved in the preparation process for strengthening character education as stated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2018 concerning Strengthening Character Education in Article 5 paragraph 5, namely: optimizing the implementation of Strengthening Character Education by the community through the involvement of individuals and groups: society and institutions.

B. **Target Group**

About revealing the subjects that are the policy targets and the subjects that are expected to change with the policies being implemented. The policy of strengthening character education targets students.

Table 1. Numbers at SMPN 20 North Poleang

No.	Class	Number
1	VII a	33 people
2	VII b	33 people
3	VIII a	24 people
4	VIII b	23 people
5	VIII c	22 people
6	IX a	26 people
7	IX b	23 people
Total		184 people

Source: SMPN 20 North Poleang

According to Aristotle in Suwardani (2020), humans have two advantages: the first is excellence in thinking, and the second is excellence in character; both types of excellence can be built, formed, and developed through education. Based on the research results at SMP Negeri 20 North Poleang, the target for strengthening character education is students, and the changes experienced by students are already there. Still, it takes time to see the changes after coaching is carried out because talking about the character is undoubtedly a challenging job to change. As Zubaedi (2011) stated, building character is acknowledged to be much more complex and takes a long time. The changes experienced by students at SMP Negeri 20 Poleang Utara can be seen from changes in student behavior such as those who used to be undisciplined are now students who are disciplined by coming to school on time, who used to be often truant are now

starting not to skip class anymore and changes such as students who are beginning to Active in valuable activities such as competitions and other extracurricular activities. This is in line with Zubaedi (2011), who states that with character education, a child will become emotionally intelligent, which, with emotional intelligence, will become an essential provision for students in preparing for their future. This is Daniel Coleman's opinion (Zubaedi, 2011) regarding a person's success in society; it turns out that 80% is influenced by emotional intelligence and 20% by brain intelligence.

C. Organisasi Yang Melaksanakan

The implementing organization is a government bureaucratic unit responsible for implementing policies. In the policy of strengthening character education, those responsible for implementing strengthening character education are heads of formal education units (school principals) and teachers, as stated in Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 87 of 2017 in article 6, paragraphs 4 and 5.

Table 2. Human Resources at SMPN 20 Poleang Utara

No.	Name	Gender	Position
1	Abbas S.Pd.,M.Pd	Male	Headmaster
2	Salmah , S.Pd	Female	Vice Principal
3	Ainun Sani, S.Pd	Female	Teacher
4	Andi St. Nurhayati, S.Pdi	Female	Teacher
5	Erna, S.Pd	Female	Teacher
6	Irma, S.Pd	Female	Teacher
7	Juarni , S.Pd	Female	Teacher
8	Jumiati	Female	Teacher
9	Kamurasang, S.Pd	Female	Teacher
10	Khaeril Aslamiah Fahri	Female	Teacher
11	M. Mata	Female	Teacher
12	Megawati S.pd	Female	Teacher
13	Mirnawati	Female	Teacher
14	Nursamsiah	Female	Teacher
15	Syamsir	Male	Teacher
16	Rahmat Jono, S.Pd	Male	Teacher
17	Muhtar, S.Pd	Male	Teacher
18	Muh. Alkautsar	Male	Teacher

Source: SMPN 20 North Poleang

There are 18 people at the school who are responsible for implementing the policy of strengthening character education. The program implementation approach is carried out with four dimensions of character management, these four dimensions have been implemented at SMP Negeri 20 North Poleang, namely:

1. Dimensions of mental exercise (ethics) Individuals who have deep spirituality, have faith and are devout. Such as getting used to Qur'an literacy and getting used to

congregational prayers.

2. Cultivating taste (aesthetic) Individuals who have moral integrity, a sense of art and culture where students are accustomed to good habits in building good morals, such as the habit of caring for others.

3. Thinking (literacy) Individuals who have academic excellence as a result of learning and lifelong learning such as through classroom learning and literacy habits where students at SMP Negeri 20 Poleang Utara every Tuesday are required to go to the library to read books for 40 minutes. Then, students' academic excellence is proven by good student grades at the top level, such as in the 2022/2023 academic year, where each class has student representatives with grades above the average, which is quite satisfactory.

4. Sports (kinesthetic) Individuals who are healthy and able to participate actively as citizens, namely the provision of sports facilities and infrastructure by schools for students to use during sports hours or free time.

This is what is stated in the 2018 Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia concerning Strengthening Character Education in Article 6, paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4. It is explained that strengthening character education is carried out through three approaches, namely class, school culture, and community:

1. Class based

   a. integrity of processes in the classroom through curriculum content in subjects, both theoretically and integrated.

   b. Strengthen classroom management and choice of teaching methodology and evaluation

   c. Develop local content according to regional needs

2. Based on school culture

   a. Getting used to values in daily school life

   b. Adult role models in educational settings

   c. Involving the school ecosystem

   d. Wide space for all students' potential through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities

   e. Empowering school management

   f. Take into account school norms, regulations, and traditions

3. Community-based

   a. The potential of the environment as a source of learning, such as the presence and support of arts and culture activists, community leaders, the business world, and the industrial world

b. Synergy between PPK and various programs within the scope of academics, educational activists, and NGOs

c. Synchronize programs and activities through collaboration with local governments, the community, and students' parents.

Then, the obstacles faced by the school, such as the existence of students with poor character who are difficult to change, because basically, the human character is complex to change, as in research conducted by Lestari (2021), which revealed the inhibiting factors that hinder the implementation of values. Character, namely the difficulty of changing a child's innate characteristics that are not good so that they can influence the character of other students. Furthermore, some parents still feel that their children are given the burden of being disciplined, the influence of the student's environment, and what they see on students' social media, which may not be by the character values taught at school. This supports Septiana et al.'s (2023) statement that policy implementation is a collaboration between various actors, organizations, procedures, and work techniques that can be carried out together (synchronized) to realize the desired goals and programs.

D. Enviromental Factor

Environmental factors are elements in the environment that influence policy implementation. According to Mohammad Surya in Hidayat (2019), the environment is anything that stimulates individuals so that individuals are involved and influence their development. According to Nuqul (2005), the physical, non-physical, or social environment will influence a person's physical and psychological performance, dramatically influencing behavior in that place, both individual and social behavior. Based on the results of research at SMP Negeri 20 North Poleang, it was found that environmental elements that influence the implementation of strengthening character education are:

1. Family environmental factors are where students grow up from childhood.The family has a vital role in improving the quality of human resources; moral education in the family needs to be instilled from an early age in every individual because, however, apart from the level of education, individual morals are also a measure of the success or failure of development (Sari, 2021)

2. The school environment, a crucial setting where students interact with teachers and peers, plays a significant role in shaping students' character. The school environment greatly influences students' character because it is second after the family in shaping children's character as a shield and provision for action (Ningsih et al., 2023).

3. The wider community environment, a powerful influencer where students interact, significantly impacts the success of instilling aesthetic and ethical values for character formation.The wider community environment clearly influences the success of instilling aesthetic and ethical values for character formation because adults can provide examples and invite or prohibit children from carrying out certain actions (Subianto, 2013).

In line with what Maunah (2016) stated, firstly, the family environment is where children are raised and is the first environment that a child experiences in navigating his life so what the children in the family see and feel can influence growth. Moreover, mental development, the second is the school environment, which is a continuation of education in the family, and the third is the community environment, which has a significant role in school education where students, by seeing what is happening in society, will provide direct experience to children. Then the researchers also found that environmental influences are not only related to the family, school, and community environment but more broadly, namely social media environmental factors which significantly influence children's character development due to shows on social media, which are not all good. This is in line with research conducted by Koni (2016), which revealed that in the current era of social media networks, social media networks are not functioning as they should because social networks influence the character education of students who use them, such as negative influences in the form of being fond of showing off in public. Social networking.

4. Conclusion

Implementation of the Policy for Strengthening Character Education at SMP Negeri 20 North Poleang, Bombana Regency, has been going well. The character education policy is a guideline for providing services to students to create excellent and intelligent students. Schools, as policy-implementing organizations, have carried out many activities for students so that students have good behavior and are comfortable studying. However, the role of parents still needs to be stronger because there is still a need for information conveying or understanding to parents regarding character education strengthening programs. So schools need to collaborate intensively with students' parents. As the targets of this policy, students need to be strengthened with more practical activities within the school because they are influenced by various factors in their environment, such as the family environment, school environment, community environment, and social media environment.

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