

Teachers and Learning: Efforts to Develop Students' Character

Fatimah Uri ^{1*}, Chanifuddin ²

^{1*,2} Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Bengkalis, Riau, Indonesia

fatimahury45@gmail.com , chanifudin@kampusmelayu.ac.id

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21107/Widyagogik/v12i2.28812>

Received November 12, 2024; November 28, 2024; Accepted December 27, 2024

Abstract

A teacher is a person who is crucial in helping students develop the moral character, knowledge, and keterampilan that they need to achieve success in the future. Effective learning does not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also on developing students' character so that they become quality individuals, have good ethics, and are able to contribute positively to society. In this research, various literature related to educational theories, learning approaches, and character concepts are used as the basis for identifying strategies that can be applied by teachers in an effort to shape student character. Based on a literature review, it was found that the integration of character values in daily learning activities, the application of experience-based learning models, as well as humanist and participatory learning approaches, have great potential in forming students' strong character and integrity. It is hoped that this research can provide insight for educators and policy makers in formulating a more effective approach in developing student character in the educational environment.

Keywords – Teachers; Learning; Character; Students.



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1. Introduction

In formal education, the primary responsibilities of teachers encompass teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students. According to Karwati & Priansa (2014), as the primary facilitators at the school level, teachers are entrusted with identifying, nurturing, and maximizing the potential of each student to help them integrate into a moral and ethical society. Teachers serve as the principal providers of education for students; beyond delivering knowledge, they play a crucial role in assisting students to acquire the values and skills necessary for their personal development and societal participation. This dual function underscores the significant impact of teachers in shaping students' character, fostering their moral compass, and equipping them to navigate the complexities of life.

Some argue that teachers are the primary factor in students' academic achievement because they are leaders in education and bear responsibility for shaping the quality of the nation's future generations. However, the role of teachers extends beyond merely imparting knowledge; they also serve as a source of motivation for students to excel in their studies (Manizar, 2015). According to Sopian (2016), being a quality teacher is not solely about expertise in a specific subject area but also involves a comprehensive understanding of how education should be conducted professionally and effectively. Teachers must be able to integrate academic knowledge with fundamental teaching skills to ensure that the learning process runs smoothly and yields meaningful outcomes.

Teachers are regarded as natural leaders with the ability to provide guidance, particularly when addressing various social issues. Due to their role and influence, teachers not only educate students in the classroom but also have the potential to make a broader positive impact on society. This role positions teachers as key agents of change in improving the quality of social life, both locally and globally (Bourn, 2015).

For instance, in countries within the Global South, teachers play a dual and significant role. Beyond educating students, they act as social leaders who help

guide communities toward positive transformation. Teachers contribute not only to education but also to advancing various aspects of life, including economic, social, and cultural development. This highlights their role as drivers of change and holistic community development.

As Tuncer (2009) argues, educators bear a crucial responsibility to continuously strive for improving literacy and the quality of educational environments. These efforts go beyond teaching to create conditions that foster the optimal development of students. By fulfilling this responsibility, educators enable students to reach their full potential, both academically and personally, preparing them for the future. Teachers can support better learning outcomes by incorporating metacognitive and reflective teaching techniques. Metacognition involves helping students understand how they learn, think, and solve problems, while reflection engages students in evaluating their learning experiences. These approaches enable students to become more self-aware, independent, and effective learners (Graham, 2003).

To enhance students' understanding, teachers can apply metacognitive strategies such as asking reflective questions and encouraging self-assessment of the learning process. This approach helps students become more aware of their learning methods, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and develop the skills needed for more effective learning.

An effective and meaningful learning process is achieved when there is a harmonious interaction between teachers and students, as well as among students themselves. This tri-directional interaction fosters a collaborative (cooperative) and dynamic (active and enthusiastic) learning atmosphere. As a result, the learning environment becomes more conducive to the development of understanding, skills, and meaningful learning experiences for all parties involved. According to Day, C. (2004), over the past 30 years, the role of teachers has undergone significant transformation. Teachers are no longer merely instructors delivering material; they have also assumed the roles of mentors and

learning facilitators. This shift is critical to ensuring that the learning process is both effective and impactful.

To meet these evolving demands, teachers must remain attentive to the changing expectations of society regarding education and adapt their approaches accordingly. By doing so, they can provide students with learning experiences that are relevant, meaningful, and aligned with the needs of the modern era. Teachers are tasked with bridging the gap between traditional teaching methods and contemporary educational demands, ensuring that their students are well-equipped to navigate an ever-changing world. This dual role emphasizes the importance of adaptability and responsiveness in creating an educational environment that fosters both academic achievement and holistic growth.

Teachers play a vital role in the transfer of knowledge as well as the transmission of values. Without the incorporation of value-based education alongside the transfer of knowledge, the learning process risks losing its meaning and becoming fragile. This underscores that effective learning is not solely about mastering subject matter but also about shaping character and instilling moral values, which provide students with a solid foundation to navigate life's challenges (Sari & Jarkawi, 2021). The role of teachers in education is indispensable, encompassing a wide range of responsibilities. These include designing engaging learning activities, identifying appropriate teaching models and strategies, and fostering a learning environment that is welcoming, safe, and supportive for students. By fulfilling these multifaceted roles, teachers ensure that education serves as a holistic process, equipping students not only with intellectual capabilities but also with the moral compass necessary for their personal and societal development.

2. Method

The literature study method was employed in the writing of this paper. A wide range of resources, including books, journals, documents, and other library materials such as the internet, are utilized for the literature review. According to

Nursalam (2016), the literature study method involves a series of activities related to managing written materials, reading and taking notes, as well as collecting library data.

This paper adopts a literature review approach, focusing on the findings of previous studies related to the subject or object of the research. The information used in this study is derived from research findings that have been conducted and published in books and national online publications. This method ensures a comprehensive analysis of existing knowledge and provides a solid foundation for the research framework.

3. Result and Discussion

The development of students' character is one of the primary responsibilities of teachers in the learning process. Teachers play a critical role in shaping the moral and ethical values of students, focusing not only on academic achievement but also on fostering a well-rounded personality.

Learning is defined as "a process of interaction between students, educators, and learning resources within a learning environment," as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Chapter I, General Provisions. This definition emphasizes the importance of interaction and the role of teachers in creating an educational experience that nurtures both intellectual and personal growth. By integrating character development into the learning process, teachers contribute to shaping future generations equipped with the values and competencies needed to thrive in society.

Learning is an effort made by teachers to assist students in mastering concepts, skills, and character. It also refers to the process in which teachers create the most conducive environment for students to learn and achieve predetermined learning objectives. As previously mentioned, learning comprises three main elements: students, teachers, and learning materials. Learning can be viewed as a system where these three elements interact to form interdependent and interconnected relationships. Without interaction among these elements,

learning cannot occur. Therefore, for the learning process to function effectively and efficiently, these three elements must work in harmony (Nurzannah, 2022).

Learning is a significant and complex human activity. Its complexity arises from the involvement of numerous human factors and values. Learning is essential because it aims to shape individuals with noble character. A civilization can collapse due to failures in the learning process. Some people understand that education and learning are not the same. Learning is more broadly perceived as an activity primarily focused on the cognitive and psychomotor development of children. It involves enhancing their knowledge, critical thinking, methodological reasoning, and objectivity, as well as proficiency in specific tasks, such as writing, swimming, repairing electronic devices, and more (Zein, 2016).

This understanding underscores the multifaceted nature of learning, which integrates academic, personal, and practical growth. Through effective learning, individuals are better equipped to contribute meaningfully to society while fostering personal and ethical development. In learning, whether in conventional teacher-centered approaches or student-centered methods, the role of the teacher remains unique and, arguably, irreplaceable. As professional educators, teachers are tasked with numerous responsibilities and are expected to embody the qualities of an effective and excellent teacher (Suyono & Hariyanto, 2012, p. 187). Within the learning process, the teacher plays a critical role in guiding students to adapt to the various challenges they encounter in life. Teachers educate by creating an environment that encourages active learning, enabling students to develop their full potential. Empowering students involves fostering their personality, particularly in intellectual, social, emotional, and skill-based aspects (Sutikno, 2021).

The effectiveness of any educational activity hinges on the teacher's role as a tutor and educator. Consequently, teachers are at the center of discussions regarding curriculum revisions, the acquisition of educational resources, and the standards of human resources produced through educational efforts. This highlights the critical importance of teaching within the field of education. Issues

related to teaching and classroom learning activities are directly addressed by teachers, emphasizing their pivotal position in ensuring the success of educational processes. This underscores the dual responsibility of teachers—not only to impart knowledge but also to cultivate students' holistic development and prepare them to navigate an increasingly complex world.

According to Usman (2001), teaching, training, and education are all part of the responsibilities of a teacher. Additionally, the responsibilities and duties of a teacher are not limited to the community; in fact, these elements are fundamentally strategic and play a crucial role in determining the direction of a nation's development.

In relation to education, the educator's role is to provide quality teaching. Regarding teaching, the teacher's responsibility is to assist students in learning new things. In terms of training, the teacher is tasked with helping students acquire life skills and competencies. Meanwhile, learning management includes planning lessons, conducting both summative and formative evaluations, encouraging and promoting learning, organizing student learning, whether in traditional or group settings, and overseeing the learning process. These tasks underscore the essential role of teachers in shaping the educational experience and, by extension, contributing to the broader goals of societal and national development. Teachers are pivotal in ensuring that students not only gain knowledge but also develop essential skills for their personal and collective futures.

Teachers carry not only professional responsibilities but also social and humanitarian duties. Becoming a parental figure for their students is a humanistic role that teachers take on. As human beings, teachers have a humanitarian responsibility to lay the foundation for students to understand themselves as thinking, working, and natural beings. Teachers are also tasked with helping students develop into individuals who can evolve and discover their identity within the context of society. From a social perspective, educators have the duty to shape society by nurturing individuals who are moral and ethical, thereby

contributing to the overall improvement of the nation's quality of life. It is therefore reasonable to regard teaching as a highly noble profession, given the challenging nature of the tasks that educators must undertake. In this way, teaching is not just a career but a profound responsibility to guide the next generation toward becoming responsible and ethical members of society, making a lasting impact on both individual lives and the broader community.

The role of teachers in the 21st century is to facilitate a learning process that embodies the four pillars of education as recommended by the UNESCO International Commission on Education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. These four pillars require teachers to: (1) Master knowledge not only as a product but primarily as a process. Teachers must understand the discipline they specialize in as ways of knowing. (2) Recognize students as individuals in the process of development, understanding their cognitive, social, emotional, and moral growth. (3) Understand education as a process of cultural transmission, enabling them to choose learning models and evaluation systems that foster the socialization of various skills, values, and attitudes in the process of learning various subjects.

Students must have confidence in their ability to grow and change as individuals during the learning process. This can only occur when teachers successfully translate the students' contextual experiences through the learning they deliver. Therefore, learning and management must be transformed into centers of exploration and self-identity discovery, as stated by Riyanto (Riyanto, 2002). What an instructor says in front of the class will quickly be forgotten and will not leave a lasting impression if there is no environment or activity to support it. In other words, students will not absorb anything and will have to work hard to relearn. Thus, effective learning is not just about delivering content; it is about creating an environment that allows students to engage deeply with the material and develop both intellectually and personally. Teachers, as facilitators of this process, must nurture an environment where students can build confidence, explore their potential, and connect the learning experience to their own lives.

Human development in its entirety is essentially the philosophy of education. The process of cultivating individuals to achieve ultimate goals—connecting with God and oneself—and advancing the welfare of society—through behaviors toward oneself, family, society, and the environment—is what constitutes true education. Teachers must be able to blend their lessons and provide a platform for value education if they want students to achieve complete personal growth. Value education is the process by which an individual discovers personal meaning by studying specific values throughout their life. This "journey into the depths of oneself" requires engagement with the most profound aspects of the human being, including the capacity for self-discovery, introspection, analysis, and reflection.

The process of value education also directly addresses and successfully engages with three aspects of human nature—cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor. A learning process that encompasses the whole of an individual's life is known as value education. Instructors must be able to integrate three levels of teaching: how to study current realities, concepts, and skills related to the realities of students' lives, if the learning process is also value education, as claimed by Riyanto (Riyanto, 2002). Below is a detailed explanation of the three levels of teaching proposed by Riyanto:

- a. Level One – Studying Current Realities: This level focuses on the students' awareness of the present situation around them, which includes their personal, social, and environmental realities. It helps them grasp the immediate world they live in and their place within it. This level encourages students to critically analyze their surroundings and reflect on the values that shape their experiences.
- b. Level Two – Studying Concepts: At this level, students engage with concepts, theories, and frameworks that help explain the world around them. The focus is on understanding the underlying principles and ideas that influence human behavior, social structures, and ethical

considerations. By studying concepts, students are encouraged to think abstractly and systematically about real-world issues.

- c. Level Three – Developing Skills: The final level involves the application of concepts to real-life situations. Here, students not only learn but also practice the skills needed to navigate their personal and social environments effectively. This stage encourages the integration of knowledge into actionable behaviors and decisions that reflect the values learned and personal growth achieved through the learning process.

Together, these three levels of teaching are essential for a holistic approach to education, where the mind, emotions, and actions of students are developed in a balanced way, leading to a meaningful and transformative educational experience. The three levels of teaching mentioned by Riyanto above suggest that every teaching included in the learning process should be humanistic, meaning it must emphasize that all teaching implicitly carries moral and humanitarian values. Therefore, teaching needs to highlight the importance of certain mindsets. Teachers are expected to instill values, beliefs, and concepts about human beings, human nature, perceptions, and roles in the world through specific subjects. They also need to have a mature personality to be role models for students. To better understand students, educators must become more sensitive to the prevailing values and how these values impact attitudes and behaviors in society. Developing students' personalities and helping them become role models for adults is an important responsibility of educators.

Teaching is more than just disseminating knowledge and skills; it is also a process of instilling values. However, in the end, it should culminate in how to embody the principles that have been understood in everyday life. Since students are involved in the learning process voluntarily and without coercion, they will be more prepared to learn if they feel that the education they are undergoing truly demonstrates care and responsibility toward them.

Teachers responsible for value education use teaching resources to examine the principles and values that enable each individual to grow in the best possible way. Several elements need to be considered when organizing learning. According to Riyanto (2002), there are three aspects that need to be considered in order for learning to occur effectively and achieve its goals: (1) the teacher's personal factors, (2) classroom discipline, and (3) building relationships. These elements are explained as follows:

The Educator's Personality. Regardless, the educator is a very important factor in the learning process. They can or cannot create a learning atmosphere in the classroom. The classroom atmosphere—whether conducive, inspiring, or uninteresting—depends heavily on how the educator positions themselves. An enthusiastic, patient, and attentive teacher can create a pleasant learning environment, while a rigid or indifferent teacher may make the class feel boring. The classroom atmosphere depends on the educator's personality. Attitudes, communication style, and the character of the educator are factors that build or damage the learning environment. The educator brings their entire self—not only academic competence but also values, ethics, and morals visible in their daily life.

A polite, enthusiastic, and empathetic teacher will be a good role model for students. The resources learned by children not only include subject information but also value statements, expressions, attitudes, and actions from the teacher. Teachers should strive to remain adaptable, friendly, and neat. Only teachers who teach themselves can bring the lesson to life. A friendly and flexible attitude helps create an inclusive atmosphere where students feel comfortable asking questions and interacting. Lively and meaningful learning can only occur if educators can express themselves authentically—engaging knowledge, emotions, values, and personal experiences.

Classroom Discipline. Allowing students to do whatever they choose is not the same as teaching as a process of developing principles. Students are given freedom in the sense of being able to explore who they are and what they can become. Helping students understand who they are and what they want to

achieve in life. The goal of discipline is to provide guidance to students on appropriate behavior. In addition to encouraging students to take responsibility for their decisions, teachers also help them understand the boundaries and impacts of their behavior. Making agreements with students is the first step in achieving this. A set of general guidelines in the learning process becomes the agreement. Regarding limitations and the potential to act and behave, each shares expectations. Teachers can use classroom management techniques to implement discipline in the class. Teachers use specific techniques to ensure discipline without removing students' sense of freedom. Creating an environment that supports learning while also building mutual respect between teachers and students. The balance of instilling values, freedom, and discipline helps create learning that is not only academic but also oriented toward character development.

Establishing Relationships. The learning process is a personal relationship between the educator and the students. The quality of learning depends on how well this relationship is established. A good relationship creates a humane classroom atmosphere, both inside and outside the class. Educators need to build relationships with students to create a conducive learning environment, where students can understand boundaries and express themselves appropriately. With such an atmosphere, learning will proceed more effectively and smoothly.

Establishing relationships in the learning process, as outlined by Riyanto, encompasses two important aspects: First, learning is not only about the transfer of knowledge, but also involves emotional, social, and psychological interactions between educators and students. This relationship creates a deep connection, making students feel valued, heard, and supported. Second, the relationship between educators and students significantly influences the learning environment. If this relationship is positive, the classroom atmosphere becomes conducive, comfortable, and humane, both in formal classroom activities and interactions outside the classroom. This boosts student motivation and participation. Educators need to strive to build good relationships with students,

for example, by showing empathy, respecting their opinions, and fostering open communication. This relationship provides space for students to express themselves freely, without fear or pressure. Third, in this relationship, educators also play an important role in establishing clear boundaries. Students need to know what is allowed and what is not in the learning process. This helps create clear rules, ensuring that the learning atmosphere remains focused and productive. When a good relationship between educators and students is established and clear rules are applied, the learning process will run more smoothly. Students are more likely to understand the material, feel comfortable asking questions or discussing, and the classroom atmosphere becomes dynamic and interactive.

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion about the teacher's efforts in developing students' character, it can be concluded that character development is a crucial aspect of the educational process. The teacher, as the person directly involved in the learning process, plays a significant role in shaping the character of students, not only in cognitive aspects but also in fostering good moral and social values.

The teacher's efforts to develop students' character can be carried out through various strategies, including: first, integrating character values into every lesson, both explicitly and implicitly. Second, creating a positive learning environment that supports the habituation of good attitudes and behaviors, such as discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect. Third, providing consistent role models from teachers, who serve as behavioral models for students. Fourth, involving students in activities that develop social and emotional skills, such as group work, discussions, and projects that require collaboration.

Approaches based on noble and humanistic values, which pay attention to students' moral and social development, have proven to be effective in shaping good character. Teachers who manage learning with a holistic, character-based

approach will help students become individuals who are better prepared to face life's challenges, both in school and in the broader society.

The development of students' character requires synergy between teachers, students, and the educational environment. With focused and continuous efforts, students' character can grow and develop well, so that they become not only academically successful individuals but also possess integrity, empathy, and the ability to contribute positively to society.

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