

## CHARACTER REVITALIZATION THROUGH ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SMPN 1 MANDAILING NATAL

### *Revitalisasi Karakter Melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam di SMPN 1 Mandailing Natal*

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#### **Abstract**

The Indonesian nation is a nation that has various races and cultures. This diversity makes it a nation that has its own character that is different from other nations. This character should be maintained through educational institutions in order to produce a generation of the nation that knows and preserves the character of the nation that has existed since their ancestors. This study uses a qualitative approach with a post-positivistic paradigm. Data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation. While data analysis with the Miles, Huberman & Saldana model. This study resulted in a shift in the character of the Indonesian nation that is classified as very complicated, this complexity is further complicated by the lack of public awareness that our national character has long been lost. The glittering currents of modernization and globalization are the main factors in the loss of the nation's character. The readiness of society to face the modern era forces them to fall asleep and be lulled by the strains of electronic sophistication without being able to fortify themselves with sufficient knowledge. Likewise, the sudden flow of globalization cannot be blocked by clarity of heart and mind so that it blinds the paradigm of long-term thinking. As a result, the



character of the nation is now just a sweet memory when remembered and bitter when remembered. The development of national character in schools through Islamic religious education is carried out in several stages, namely familiarizing oneself with religious activities, action planning and giving awards.

*Bangsa Indonesia adalah bangsa yang memiliki bermacam ras budaya yang bermacam-macam. Keanekaragaman ini menjadikannya sebagai bangsa yang memiliki karakter sendiri berbeda dengan bangsa yang lain. Sekolah sebagai lembaga pendidikan formal harusnya mampu menjadi benteng dalam internalisasi karakter bangsa ini ke dalam diri peserta didik sehingga melahirkan peserta didik yang berkarakter. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan paradigma post positivistik. Lokasi penelitian ini di SMPN 1 Mandailing Natal. Pengumpulan data dengan wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Sementara analisis data dengan model Miles, Huberman & Saldana. Penelitian ini menghasilkan pergeseran karakter bangsa Indonesia tergolong sangat rumit, kerumitan ini dipersulit lagi dengan kurangnya kesadaran masyarakat bahwa karakter bangsa kita sudah lama hilang. Gemerlapnya arus modernisasi dan globalisasi menjadi faktor utama hilangnya karakter bangsa tersebut. Kesiapan masyarakat menghadapi zaman modern memaksa mereka untuk larut tertidur dan dibuai manja oleh alunan kecanggihan elektronik tanpa mampu membentengi diri dengan pengetahuan yang cukup memadai. Demikian halnya dengan arus globalisasi yang serba dadakan tidak mampu dibendung dengan kejernihan hati dan pikiran, sehingga membutuhkan paradigma berpikir panjang. Akibatnya, karakter bangsa kini tinggal kenangan manis bila ingat dan pahit bila kenang. Pembangunan karakter bangsa di sekolah melalui pendidikan agama Islam dilakukan dengan beberapa tahapan, yaitu pembiasaan kegiatan keagamaan, perencanaan aksi dan pemberian penghargaan.*

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## A. INTRODUCTION

A nation is a region that has a system that has been approved by the indigenous people and the world. A nation is a collection of islands that have received official recognition from the international world in the form of area, managerial capabilities, defense capabilities, politics, economy, social and others. The rationality of a nation's existence can be seen from various aspects of the state of the archipelago it has. For example, the Indonesian nation which has various cultures, races, tribes, and ethnicities that are all united in *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* from Sabang to Meraoke (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). The existence of a developing nation provides a sense of pride for its people, conversely the decline of a nation can also tarnish the social life of its people themselves. The progress of the nation on the modern journey provides



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its own nuances, especially the character of the nation which is ebb and flow from various aspects of life ('Ula & Shihabbuddin, 2024).

The character of the nation emerges and develops along with the standard of living of its people, as well as the development of the character of its people along with the level of behavior of the people of the nation itself. Advancing and developing society can be encouraged by improving educational institutions that have a significant role in determining the character of the nation now and in the future. Formal, non-formal, and informal educational institutions determine the fate of the character of the nation without exception. The community that has received education from these three types of education, these educational institutions are expected to be able to provide a positive contribution to the community and its environment (Salim et al., 2024). Educational institutions aim to be able to change society from ignorance to knowledge, black to white, dark to bright, negative to positive, and so on.

The development of educational institutions should have a positive influence on the revitalization of the nation's character which has gradually been marginalized by many things, such as. The flow of globalization, mass media, electronic media, the development of people's mindsets without limits, the wrong political direction, and freedom that goes beyond existing norms (Oktarina et al., 2021). Other highlights also point to the government system that has special autonomy rights granted by the central government to several regions in Indonesia.

In institutions such as Junior High Schools, character building for students is very urgent to do. This is because many junior high school students are influenced by foreign seduction and concepts so that their characters change. Therefore, Islamic religious education plays a very active role in instilling character in students, especially religious character. The instillation of religious character will make students become religiously aware and able to position themselves to behave in the midst of the noisy world in today's society (Ikhram et al., 2023). From the above phenomenon, the author is interested in writing a paper that provides a contribution to the revitalization of the nation's character that should be born from Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.

## **B. METHOD**

This study uses a post-positivistic or naturalistic paradigm that is natural and aims to understand a case. This type of research is qualitative and field study because it aims to understand what is implied behind what is written (Daymon & Holloway, 2005). The design of this research is a case study, because it understands a particular case in depth. Research on character revitalization through islamic religious education in SMPN 1 Mandailing Natal uses a naturalistic qualitative approach with a single-case study design (Sherman & Webb, 2005).



The researcher uses a naturalistic qualitative approach, because the object being studied takes place in a natural setting and aims to know, understand, and appreciate carefully, about how the character revitalization through islamic religious education in schools. This research was conducted at SMPN 1 Mandailing Natal. Data collection techniques in this study were in-depth interviews, participant observation and documentation studies (Patton, 2015).

This research was conducted in November 2024 and the researcher conducted interviews with the principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers who directly handled the revitalization of Character Education at SMPN 1 Mandailing Natal. While data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), namely data condensation, data collection, data presentation and drawing conclusions. Data Validity includes extending observations, requiring research persistence, triangulation, discussion with colleagues (Yin, 2018).

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Overview of SMPN 1 Mandailing Natal

Another name is SMPN 1 Natal which is located on Jl. Sutan Syahrir 120 Natal, Mandailing Natal Regency, North Sumatra. The number of teachers is 23 people with 6 male and 17 female. The number of students is around 332 children with the majority being Muslim. This SMPN is quite advanced in Mandailing Natal Regency because many of its students excel, both at the Regency and Sub-district levels. This school also has a good image in the community so that many people enroll their children in this school.

### 2. Schools as Character Education Institutions in Formal Education

Schools as one of the educational institutions should provide a high contribution to the instillation of good values (national character) that are in line with the fields and character of the Indonesian people. The depiction of these values must be demonstrated by education managers who have special attention to schools (Sari et al., 2020). The school is required to find a reliable formula in improving the nation's moral decadence, the decline in the nation's morals has emerged due to the shift in the nation's character through the syndicates of modernization lately. The emergence of new hopes to fix it is that society must open its eyes and minds.

The root of the problem is no longer looking for the root of the problem, but now we must be able to fix ourselves, introspect, and reflect on the actions we have taken so far. Schools must be able to change the paradigm of the learning process, the renewal of the right concept paradigm to reopen the mindset of society for the next generation (Umar et al., 2024). At least schools have special autonomy to develop values that are presentative in the eyes of society. So far, society has trusted schools to be able to change the



nation's generation from slump and decline to a better direction, the process of ignorance to being proficient in various fields of knowledge.

The following are efforts that can be made by schools to rebuild the nation's lost character:

*First*, Looking and learning from behind. The concept of management provides a new nuance from various aspects of life. Society must be able to utilize the SWOT formula (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat). This analysis is quite useful for producing solutions in the form of ideas to find things that can solve all existing problems.

*Second*, Revitalizing the curriculum and learning models. Learning should balance the three demands of education between cognitive, affective and psychomotor values. Providing equality of the three educational domains to produce a generation of the nation that has a dignified national character, noble character, and has a reflection of the Indonesian nation as a whole. Curriculum development is not interpreted as merely changing, but the tip of the horn of the curriculum does not point to high numbers but abstract values also determine the graduation of the nation's children. The graduation value is not based on sitting on the exam bench for 2 hours but the previous learning process also determines how the generation develops. Likewise with the learning method (Rahayu et al., 2023). Syamsul Ma'arif in (Hasnadi et al, 2021) emphasized that there are several approaches that must be taken in instilling student values, including the historical approach of the nation, the sociological approach of the nation, the cultural approach of the nation, the psychological approach of the nation, the aesthetic approach of the nation, and the gender perspective approach.

*Third*, Revitalization of the paradigm of thinking of education and students. Changing the paradigm of thinking of teachers and students means providing an understanding to both elements of education that the more the era develops, the more we need to introspect ourselves in various things (Negara et al., 2024). For example, the learning process is not an arena for obtaining passing grades, the learning process is not a process of becoming who is the smartest and who is the stupidest. However, the learning process is changing the paradigm of thinking from bad to much better. So in this case, both of them should have a high constructive spirit in the form of increasing knowledge according to their fields, increasing a conducive learning process, having mature competence, and having a personality with noble morals.

Schools at least have a vision, mission, and goals that are in sync with the phenomenon of modern education. Indicators of national progress refer to the development of educational institutions, educational institutions must dare to take policies as long as the policy is for the good and progress of the nation. These policies can be in the form of systems, regulations, human resources, and welfare.



### 3. Internalization of Character Education in Schools Through Islamic Religious Education

Islamic religious education that is carried out must be able to touch and instill the values of national character in students. For this reason, Islamic religious education must be implemented with several innovations and developments as follows:

- a. The national education curriculum must add hours of religious education subjects which are currently only taught 2 hours a week in junior high schools, to 3 hours of lessons each week. The learning system also needs to be improved by increasing direct practice and not just based on memorization alone. In the past when KTSP, SMPN 1 Mandailing Natal also implemented Islamic Religious Education hours with an additional 1 hour of Lessons. So it's not just when implementing the Merdeka curriculum or the 2013 curriculum, it has been doing such innovations since long ago.
- b. Holding a morning briefing every morning for 10-15 minutes to listen to spiritual advice, advice and motivational words that can awaken the spiritual mentality of teachers and students. At SMPN 1 Mandailing Natal every morning, spiritual showers are centered in the teachers' room and Islamic Religious Education teachers take turns in giving spiritual showers to students.
- c. Holding a daily duty schedule for each class as marbot, muezzin, and prayer leader in the school prayer room guided by the homeroom teacher. When performing the Dhuhur prayer in congregation, the muezzin takes turns and this has been done for quite some time.
- d. Requiring all teachers and students to pray in congregation in the school prayer room. In this case, congregational Dhuhur prayer is the main icon in this program.
- e. Teachers as educators must guide, introduce and bring students closer to religious rituals, from the simplest things. Such as: 1) Pray before and after teaching and learning process; 2) Read a Hadith or verse before starting teaching and learning process; 3) Remind and motivate students to worship and do good.
- f. Religious education utilizes typical multicultural content as an enrichment of teaching materials, concepts about the harmony of life as together between religious communities, mutual tolerance, co-existence, pro-existence, cooperation, mutual respect and appreciation. To design a multicultural relationship strategy in education (including religious education) at least it can be classified into 2 (two) experiences, namely: personal experience and teaching experience carried out by teachers (educators).
- g. Personal experience can be conditioned by creating an atmosphere such as All students, both minorities and majorities, have the same status and duties, all students socialize, relate, develop and continue together with all students related to facilities, all teacher learning and



the same class norms. The form of teaching experience is as follows: teachers must be aware of student diversity, curriculum and teaching materials should reflect diversity, curriculum and teaching materials should reflect diversity, curriculum materials are written in different regional or ethnic languages. Islamic education with a multicultural perspective is an education that opens up a broader vision and horizon. Able to cross the boundaries of ethnic groups or cultural and religious traditions, so as to be able to see “humanity” as a family that has differences and similarities in ideals.

- h. Teachers must be aware of the ethnic diversity of students, cannot be in educating, second, curriculum and teaching materials should reflect ethnic diversity and third is curriculum materials are written in different regional / ethnic languages.

On the other hand, character formation must be carried out systematically and continuously involving aspects of knowledge, feeling, loving, and action. Given the importance of character building at an early age and considering that preschool age is a period of preparation for real school, then good character building at preschool age is very important to do (Lickona, 1992).

- a. Moral Knowing/Learning To Know

This stage is the first step in character education. In this stage, the goal is oriented towards mastering knowledge about values. Students must be able to: 1) distinguish between noble moral values and reprehensible moral values as well as universal values; 2) understand logically and rationally (not dogmatically and doctrinally) the importance of noble morals and the dangers of reprehensible morals in life; 3) know the figure of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. As an exemplary figure of noble morals through his Hadiths and *sunnah* (Retnasari et al., 2023).

- b. Moral Loving/Moral Feeling

Learning to love by serving others. Learning to love with unconditional love. This stage is intended to foster a sense of love and a sense of need for noble moral values. In this stage, the teacher's target is the emotional dimension of the student, the heart or soul, no longer reason, ratio and logic. The teacher touches the student's emotions so that awareness, desires and needs grow so that students are able to say to themselves, “yes, I have to be like that...” or “I need to practice this morality”. To reach this stage, teachers can enter it with touching stories, modeling, or contemplation. Through this stage, students are expected to be able to assess themselves (*muhasabah*), increasingly knowing their shortcomings (Munir & Nor, 2021).

- c. Moral Doing/Learning to do

This is the peak of success in moral subjects, students practice the values of noble morals in their daily behavior. Students become more polite, friendly, respectful, caring, honest, disciplined, loving, affectionate and affectionate, fair and generous and so on. As long as moral changes are not



yet visible in children's behavior, even if only a little, we have a pile of questions that must always be answered. Examples or role models are the best teachers in instilling values (Aliyah et al., 2023). Who we are and what we give. The next action is habituation and motivation.

The concrete form of instilling values that are formed is the instillation of multicultural character values that are ultimately able to shape the awareness of students. (Rifa'i, 2016) stated that globalization has an impact on the competition for excellence in aspects of life. In the context of education, the competition to get the best education in academic achievement has become a kind of competition. Multicultural religious values are urgent values to be internalized to students because these values will be able to make students more tolerant and more religious, even practicing their religious teachings and touching their affection and psychomotor. This paper discusses the internalization of multicultural religious values by forming a multicultural religious culture so that in the end students will be accustomed to practicing religious values and will become students who respect each other and even those of other religions.

Concrete steps to instill character values in educational institutions through the role of teachers in providing advice, according to Koentjaraningrat's theory, development efforts at three levels, namely the level of values adopted, the level of daily practices, and the level of cultural symbols (Koentjaraningrat, 1989).

At the level of values adopted, it is necessary to formulate jointly the agreed religious values and need to be developed in educational institutions, to further build a shared commitment and loyalty among all members of the educational institution towards the agreed values. At this stage, consistency is also needed to implement the agreed values and requires the competence of the person formulating the values in order to provide examples of how to apply and manifest the values in daily activities.

In the level of daily practice, the agreed religious values are manifested in the form of daily attitudes and behaviors by all school residents (Muhaimin, 2008; Nurdiana, 2024; Retnasari et al., 2023). The development process can be carried out through three stages, namely: *first*, socialization of the agreed religious values as ideal attitudes and behaviors to be achieved in the future in educational institutions. *Second*, determining a weekly or monthly action plan as a systematic stage and step that will be carried out by all parties in educational institutions that embody the agreed religious values (Minhaji & Qomariyah, 2016; Nasikhah et al., 2021; Sahlan, 2010). *Third*, giving awards to the achievements of educational institution residents, such as teachers, education personnel, and students as an effort to habituate (habit formation) that upholds attitudes and behaviors that are committed and loyal to the teachings and religious values agreed upon. Awards do not always mean material (economic), but also in social, cultural, psychological or other meanings (Muhaimin, 2009; Muhtar et al., 2019).





In terms of cultural symbols, the development that needs to be done is to replace cultural symbols that are less in line with religious teachings and values with religious cultural symbols (Muhaimin, 2006; Muhkam & Agus, 2022). Changes in symbols can be done by changing the clothing model with the principle of covering the genitals, displaying students' work, photos and mottos that contain messages of religious values.

Strategies to familiarize religious values in educational institutions can be done through: 1) power strategy (R. Fathurrohman et al., 2023) namely the strategy of cultivating religion in educational institutions by using power or through people's power, in this case the role of the head of the educational institution with all his power is very dominant in making changes; 2) persuasive strategy (M. Fathurrohman, 2016), which is carried out through the formation of opinions and views of the community or residents of the educational institution; 3) normative re-educative (Mustadjab, 2019). Norms are rules that apply in society. norms are socialized through education, norms are coupled with re-education to instill and replace the old paradigm of thinking of the community with a new one.

#### D. CONCLUSION

The shift in the character of the Indonesian nation is very complicated, this complexity is further complicated by the lack of public awareness that our national character has long been lost. The glittering currents of modernization and globalization are the main factors in the loss of the nation's character. The readiness of society to face the modern era forces them to fall asleep and be lulled by the strains of electronic sophistication without being able to fortify themselves with adequate knowledge. Likewise, the sudden current of globalization cannot be dammed with clarity of heart and mind so that it blinds the paradigm of long-term thinking. As a result, the character of the nation is now just a sweet memory when remembered and bitter when remembered. The development of national character in schools through Islamic religious education is carried out in several stages, namely familiarizing oneself with religious activities, action planning and giving awards.

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