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Exploration of Moral and Spiritual Development in Education: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study describes the results of a qualitative research on the exploration of moral and spiritual development in Vocational High Schools in Surakarta and how the integration of spiritual components in the curriculum can influence students' character development. Through a participatory observation approach and in-depth interviews, the research highlights the school's commitment to students' character development through prayer, Religious Education subjects, and religious activities. Prayer is identified as the primary means to build students' spiritual connections, while Religious Education is designed to stimulate personal reflection and interfaith tolerance. Students' participation in religious activities is considered an integral element in shaping moral and spiritual character. The discussion covers the importance of integrating spiritual components into the curriculum, the role of teachers, challenges, and recommendations for improvement. The research findings provide deep insights into the school's efforts to shape students' characters holistically, laying the foundation for the development of more effective moral and spiritual education.

Keywords: *Exploration, Moral Development, Qualitative, Spiritual.*

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INTRODUCTION

According to Pristiwanti (2022), human efforts in developing spiritual potential and character are also included in the understanding of education. Education in Indonesia is a crucial matter that must be considered as it deliberately designed and structured activity to help students developing their potential optimally (Kesanti, A.

R. W., & Budiyanto, C. W. 2020). Some things to avoid in preventing character damage that can jeopardize the future of the nation include corruption, brawls, and conflicts between ethnic groups, as indicated by the research conducted by Aziizu (2018). In a study by Rochmah (2017), education is not only about the transfer of knowledge but also the holistic formation of students' characters, with a crucial aspect being the development of moral and spiritual values. This aligns with the current situation where teachers are not just responsible for imparting

knowledge but are also expected to shape students' characters (Rokhman & Syaifudin, 2014).

According to Maragustam (2021), moral and spiritual education is essential because without it, individuals may lack character, unable to distinguish between what is real and what is not, as well as discerning between needs and wants. Consequently, individuals may lose their sense of identity. At this juncture, the cultivation of spiritual character and love for the homeland becomes crucial, with the focus being on the individual rather than the system (Abdi, 2018).

Character education is also considered crucial to be implemented in education from early childhood to adolescence (Omeri, 2015). In the research conducted by Munjiat (2018), it is also stated that religion serves as a guide for life and a determinant of adolescent behavior, emphasizing its importance and the need for attention. This article explores the results of qualitative observations and research conducted in a Vocational High School in Surakarta, prioritizing the moral and spiritual development of students through various approaches such as prayer, Religious Education subjects, and mandatory religious activities.

The significance of understanding the positive impact of integrating spiritual values in education serves as the primary foundation for this research. The discussion will encompass the roles of prayer and Religious Education subjects in shaping students' characters, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by schools in implementing these approaches. Thus, this research aims to provide profound insights into

how education can effectively serve as a platform for the formation of moral and spiritual characters in students.

RESEARCH METHOD

According to Sidiq (2019), qualitative research is a type of research that focuses on in-depth observation. This research adopts a qualitative approach to gain a profound understanding of the moral and spiritual development of students in Vocational High Schools in Surakarta. The qualitative approach is chosen because it allows the researcher to explore the meanings, perspectives, and experiences of participants in depth (Mei, 2023). The focus on the quality of data provides a comprehensive picture of the observed phenomenon, aligning with the research objective of gaining profound insights into the school's efforts to shape students' character.

The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, where the selection of teachers as participants is based on their knowledge and experience in managing moral and spiritual aspects in the school environment (Patton, 2002). A teacher is considered a significant representation of the group and can provide rich and relevant insights regarding school practices (Oleson & Hora, 2014).

Interviews are data collection techniques that are based on self-report or at least on self-knowledge and belief (Artikatama, 2019). In-depth interviews were conducted with one teacher who has relevant experience and knowledge related to character formation in students. The interview process was recorded

using an audio recording device to ensure the accuracy and clarity of the collected data. The audio recording will serve as the primary source for further data analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The results of this research are derived from statements made by one of the teachers in Vocational High School in Surakarta, serving as the informant through interviews. These findings have been summarized in key points, as follows:

School Priorities Regarding Moral and Spiritual Development:

- It was conveyed that the school holds a strong commitment to the moral and spiritual development of students.
- Prayer, religious education subjects, and regular religious activities are integrated into the curriculum to ensure that these aspects take center stage.

The Role of Prayer in Character Formation:

- Prayer is considered the primary means to build students' spiritual connections.
- Observations indicate that prayer moments at the beginning and end of class sessions provide opportunities for students to reflect and focus their attention.

Religious Education Subjects:

- It was found that the Religious Education subjects are designed not only to provide religious knowledge but also to encourage personal reflection and interfaith tolerance.
- Teachers actively facilitate discussions involving students in understanding the moral values inherent in religious teachings.

Mandatory Religious Activities:

- The school organizes regular religious activities such as collective worship, sermons, or religious celebrations that align with the students' beliefs.
- Student participation in these activities is considered an integral part of shaping their moral and spiritual character.

Related Literature:

The study "RELIGIUSITAS SISWA MADRASAH ALIYAH DAN SEKOLAH MENENGAH ATAS" by Iyoh Mastiyah in 2018 provides a relevant framework to connect spiritual exploration indicators with the recently obtained research findings on moral and spiritual development in Vocational High Schools in Surakarta.

In the context of this research, spiritual exploration indicators encompassing knowledge, appreciation, belief, worship behavior, negative behavior, and social behavior can be integrated to obtain a more comprehensive overview of the moral and spiritual development of students in Vocational High Schools. The indicators are outlined as follows:

Knowledge and Religious Education:

The knowledge indicator from Mastiyah's study can be connected to the Religious Education subjects in this research. The focus on improving religious knowledge serves as the foundation for spiritual values.

Appreciation and Prayer:

Appreciation and meaningfulness, as covered by the appreciation indicator, can be linked to prayer as the primary means to build students' spiritual connections in this research.

Belief and Challenges:

The belief indicator can be considered when exploring how students' beliefs in values and ethics influence their moral development and how challenges are faced.

Worship Behavior:

The worship behavior indicator in Mastiyah's research can be connected to the mandatory religious activities in this study, highlighting religious practices as an integral part of moral and spiritual development.

Negative and Social Behavior:

Negative and social behaviors observed in this research align with Mastiyah's indicators of negative and social behavior, providing insights into the moral and spiritual impact on student behavior beyond the religious context.

Discussion:

The Importance of Integrating Spiritual Components into the Curriculum:

- The research indicates that the integration of spiritual components into the curriculum positively contributes to the students' character development.

The Role of Teachers in Character Formation:

- Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students in moral and spiritual aspects.
- Observations suggest that teachers who support and understand the spiritual needs of students contribute to a positive atmosphere in the school.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Research findings highlight challenges and opportunities in implementing this approach, including the diversity of students' beliefs and school policies.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

The exploration of moral and spiritual development in education at Vocational High Schools in Surakarta reveals genuine efforts to shape students' characters through prayer, Religious Education, and religious activities. The findings of this qualitative research provide profound insights into how schools can act as agents in the holistic formation of students' moral and spiritual character.

SUGGESTION

Based on the research results, it is recommended to continually enhance the quality of teaching in Religious Education subjects and involve a broader range of stakeholders in the process of developing students' character.

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