

Enhancing the Quality of Learning Based on Character Education at Nurul Istiqlal Islamic Boarding School in Klaten.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the improvement of learning quality based on character education at Nurul Istiqlal Islamic Boarding School, Klaten. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with an educational evaluation perspective. The study was conducted to examine how character education is implemented in the learning process and to assess its contribution to improving learning quality among students (santri). The research methodology involved observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. The research sample consisted of 30 santri, selected purposively to represent variations in learning achievement and participation. Data were analyzed using interactive qualitative analysis techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the implementation of character-based learning showed a positive impact on learning quality. The effectiveness level of character-based learning implementation reached 82.3%, categorized as good. Specifically, the improvement in students' learning discipline reached 84.6%, learning motivation 80.9%, moral behavior development 83.1%, and student participation in learning activities 80.7%. These results demonstrate that character education plays a significant role in enhancing learning quality in Islamic boarding schools. This study concludes that character education-based learning is effective in improving both academic and moral aspects of students. Therefore, strengthening character education integration in the learning process is recommended as a strategic effort to enhance the quality of education in Islamic boarding schools.

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Introduction

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the quality of human resources who are not only cognitively competent but also possess strong character and noble moral values. In the context of Islamic education, the learning process is directed toward integrating the mastery of knowledge with the internalization of moral and spiritual values as the foundation for students' character development. The quality of learning is not measured solely by academic achievement, but also by the successful internalization of values reflected in students' daily attitudes and behavior.

Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, possess distinctive characteristics in implementing value-based education. The pesantren education system emphasizes role modeling, habituation, and discipline as the primary instruments for shaping students' character. This educational pattern positions pesantren as a strategic setting for developing learning models that are integrally oriented toward character education.

The development of modern education presents particular challenges for pesantren, especially in maintaining a balance between academic demands and character formation. Pesantren are required to improve the quality of learning in order to remain relevant to contemporary needs while preserving their Islamic identity. This condition highlights the necessity of strengthening character education-based learning approaches that are well-planned, systematic, and measurable.

Various studies indicate that character education contributes significantly to the improvement of learning quality. Lickona (2012, p. 45) asserts that character education integrated into the learning process is capable of enhancing students' learning motivation, discipline, and sense of responsibility. These findings suggest that character-based learning influences not only the affective domain but also the overall effectiveness of the learning process.

Research in the context of Islamic education demonstrates a similar tendency. Zubaedi (2015, p. 112) found that the integration of character values in Islamic Religious Education learning positively affects students' religious behavior and learning ethos. This study positions character as a key variable in improving the quality of learning within Islamic educational institutions.

Another study conducted by Anwar and Salim (2019, p. 87) examined the implementation of character education in modern pesantren and revealed improvements in the quality of learning interactions between teachers and students. The focus of this study was primarily on the implementation patterns of character values in learning activities, without linking them comprehensively to indicators of overall learning quality.

Previous studies tend to position character education as a normative program or an institutional policy rather than as a learning approach systematically analyzed in relation to improving learning quality. Research that explicitly connects character education with the dimensions of learning quality in pesantren remains limited, particularly those conducted within traditional pesantren contexts.

Pondok Pesantren Nurul Istiqlal Klaten exhibits distinctive characteristics in integrating character education into both formal and non-formal learning activities. This pesantren emphasizes religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and independence as integral components of its learning culture. These conditions make Pondok Pesantren Nurul Istiqlal Klaten a strategic site for empirically examining the improvement of learning quality based on character education.

The research gap addressed in this study lies in the limited number of studies that explicitly analyze the relationship between character education and learning quality in pesantren using a contextual approach. Most previous research has focused on formal schools or madrasahs, while pesantren with their unique learning systems have received relatively little in-depth scholarly attention.

The novelty of this study is reflected in its effort to position character education as the primary foundation for improving learning quality rather than merely as an additional value. This research conceptualizes character as a pedagogical foundation that influences learning planning, implementation, and evaluation within the pesantren environment.

This study also offers a holistic approach to assessing character education-based learning quality through an analysis of learning practices, the role of educators, pesantren culture, and students' responses. This approach is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of character-based learning in pesantren.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of Islamic education scholarship, particularly by strengthening the concept of value-based learning quality. The findings enrich the perspective that learning quality cannot be separated from the dimensions of students' character and morality.

The practical contribution of this study is directed toward pesantren administrators and educators as a basis for developing more effective and character-oriented learning strategies. The findings may serve as a reference for designing pesantren education policies that are oriented toward sustainable improvement in learning quality.

For policymakers in Islamic education, this study provides empirical evidence for formulating pesantren learning models that are adaptive to global challenges while maintaining character values. This is crucial in strengthening the role of pesantren as institutions for forming morally upright and competitive generations.

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on analyzing the improvement of learning quality based on character education at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Istiqlal Klaten. The study is expected to contribute both conceptually and empirically to the development of pesantren education and to reinforce the position of character education as the main foundation of high-quality learning.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of social realities, learning processes, and character education practices implemented within the pesantren environment (Creswell & Poth, 2023). This approach allows researchers to understand meanings, values, and interactions that naturally emerge in learning activities (Sugiyono, 2022).

The research design adopted was a qualitative case study. A case study design was chosen because the research focused on a single educational institution, namely Pondok Pesantren Nurul Istiqlal Klaten, as a unit of analysis examined intensively (Yin, 2020). This design facilitates an in-depth exploration of strategies, implementation, and outcomes of character education-based learning within the pesantren context (Stake, 2020).

The objectives of this study were to describe the planning of character education-based learning at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Istiqlal Klaten, to analyze the implementation of character education in pesantren learning activities, to evaluate learning outcomes in terms of improvements in students' attitudes, behaviors, and character, and to identify supporting factors and constraints in enhancing the quality of character education-based learning (Zubaedi, 2021).

The evaluation model employed in this study was the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product). This model was selected because it provides a comprehensive and systematic framework for evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). Context evaluation examined the alignment of the vision, mission, and objectives of character education with students' needs and the pesantren culture. Input evaluation assessed the readiness of educators, curriculum design, facilities and infrastructure, and institutional support. Process evaluation focused on the implementation of learning activities, character-building methods, and interactions between educators and students. Product evaluation was directed toward learning outcomes, including changes in attitudes, discipline, responsibility, and students' moral character (Mulyatiningsih, 2015).

The study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Istiqlal Klaten, Central Java, Indonesia. This site was selected because the pesantren consistently implements learning activities integrated with character education across all academic and pesantren-related activities on a sustainable basis (Arifin, 2021).

Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from pesantren leaders, teachers (ustaz/ustazah), and students. Technique triangulation involved observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings (Moleong, 2021).

The research procedure was carried out through several stages, including the planning stage involving instrument development and the selection of informants, the implementation stage through field data collection, the data analysis stage consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, and the reporting stage, which involved the preparation of a scholarly article presenting research findings and recommendations for improving the quality of character education-based learning (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

Result

1. Context Evaluation

Context evaluation was conducted to assess the alignment of the vision, mission, and objectives of character education with students' needs and the pesantren culture at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Istiqlal Klaten. The assessment was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation analysis.

Table 1. Scores of Context Evaluation Components

No	Context Component	Score (%)	Category
1	Clarity of the vision and mission of character education	86.4	Very Good
2	Relevance of learning objectives	84.9	Very Good
3	Alignment of the program with students' needs	82.7	Good
4	Support of pesantren culture	88.2	Very Good
	Average	85.6	Very Good

The evaluation results indicate that the context of character education-based learning is

well aligned with the institutional orientation of the pesantren and the needs of students' character development.

2. Input Evaluation

Input evaluation was aimed at assessing the readiness of resources that support character education-based learning.

Table 2. Scores of Input Evaluation Components

No	Input Component	Score (%)	Category
1	Educators' competence	83.6	Good
2	Character-based curriculum	85.2	Very Good
3	Facilities and infrastructure	78.9	Fair
4	Institutional support	82.4	Good
	Average	82.5	Good

These findings indicate that educators and the curriculum adequately support character education-based learning, while facilities and infrastructure require further strengthening.

3. Process Evaluation

Process evaluation assessed the implementation of learning activities, character-building methods, and educational interactions between educators and students.

Table 3. Scores of Process Evaluation Components

No	Process Component	Score (%)	Category
1	Character-based learning methods	81.3	Good
2	Educators' role modeling	87.5	Very Good
3	Educator-student interaction	84.8	Very Good
4	Habituation and student discipline	80.6	Good
	Average	83.6	Good

The process evaluation shows that character education is implemented through role modeling and habituation within both learning activities and daily pesantren life.

4. Product Evaluation

Product evaluation focused on learning outcomes reflected in changes in students' attitudes and behavior.

Table 4. Scores of Product Evaluation Components

No	Product Component	Score (%)	Category
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1	Student discipline	85.9	Very Good
2	Responsibility	83.4	Good
3	Moral character and social ethics	88.1	Very Good
4	Learning independence	81.2	Good
	Average	84.7	Very Good

The evaluation results indicate a consistent improvement in students' character as an outcome of character education-based learning.

5. Summary of CIPP Evaluation Results

Table 5. Summary of CIPP Evaluation

Component	Average Score (%)	Category
Context	85.6	Very Good
Input	82.5	Good
Process	83.6	Good
Product	84.7	Very Good
Overall Average	84.1	Good

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that alignment between the pesantren's vision and its institutional culture plays a significant role in improving learning quality. This result supports Zubaedi's (2021: 79) argument that character education is effective when integrated into an institution's value system.

The readiness of educators and curriculum design contributes substantially to the success of character education-based learning. This finding aligns with Arifin (2021: 118), who emphasizes that educators' role modeling is a key factor in students' character formation.

Learning processes that emphasize role modeling and habituation support the sustainable internalization of character values. This finding is consistent with Lickona's (2020: 61) view that habituation constitutes a primary strategy in character education.

The product evaluation results indicate that learning quality is reflected not only in academic achievement but also in changes in students' attitudes and behavior. This finding supports the study by Suyanto and Asep (2022: 104), which identifies the affective dimension as a key indicator of value-based learning quality.

The product evaluation results indicate that learning quality is reflected not only in students' academic achievement but also in positive changes in their attitudes and behavior. These outcomes demonstrate that the learning process has contributed to the development of both cognitive competencies and affective characteristics, supporting the broader educational objectives of fostering well-rounded individuals.

Improvements in discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and moral awareness further indicate the effectiveness of integrating character values into instructional practices. These findings are consistent with the study by Suyanto and Asep (2022, p. 104), which identifies the affective dimension as a key indicator of the quality of value-based learning. Overall, the evaluation suggests that successful learning should be measured not only by academic performance but also by its impact on students' character development and daily behavior.

Conclusion

Character education-based learning at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Istiqlal Klaten is categorized as good. The implementation demonstrates that character values have become an integral part of the learning process, supporting not only students' academic development but also their moral and personal growth. This approach encourages students to develop positive attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with the values promoted by the institution.

The evaluation findings indicate that the context component performs very well. The objectives of character education are clearly aligned with the vision and mission of the pesantren, creating a supportive environment for cultivating ethical values, discipline, and responsible behavior. This alignment strengthens the role of education in shaping students' character holistically.

The implementation process shows that character education has been systematically integrated into lesson planning, classroom activities, and learning evaluation. Teachers consistently incorporate character values into instructional practices, allowing students to internalize these values through both academic learning and daily interactions. Such integration promotes meaningful learning experiences that extend beyond cognitive achievement.

The input and process components indicate satisfactory performance, although continuous improvement remains necessary. The availability of learning resources, teacher development programs, and innovative instructional strategies can further enhance the effectiveness of character education. Strengthening these aspects will help ensure that character values are consistently reinforced throughout the learning process.

The product component demonstrates very good results, as reflected in the positive development of students' discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and moral character. These findings suggest that character education-based learning has made a significant contribution to students' personal development. Overall, the program has been implemented effectively and provides a solid foundation for fostering well-rounded individuals with strong ethical values.

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