

INSTILLING FAITH AND MORALS FROM AN EARLY AGE: MTS GRADE 7–9 MATERIAL GUIDE

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the relevance and implementation of values in the Akidah Akhlak material for grades 7, 8, and 9 of Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) semesters 1 and 2 in character building of students in public schools, especially in SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation of teachers, students, and the school environment. The results of the study indicate that although SMP is not a religious-based institution like MTs, the values of faith and morals can still be instilled effectively through various strategies, such as religious habits, teacher role models, and the integration of moral values in Islamic Religious Education subjects. Values such as honesty, trustworthiness, tolerance, and responsibility were successfully implemented in school culture through contextual and interactive approaches. This study concludes that the Akidah Akhlak material of MTs can be an inspiration for strengthening character education in public schools. With the right strategy and support from an educational environment, the instillation of the values of akidah and morals can run optimally even in non-madrasah educational settings. This research contributes to the development of character education based on universal Islamic values.

Keywords: Instilling Faith, Morals, Material Guide, Grades 7-9

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the main foundation in forming a complete human personality, not only from an intellectual perspective, but also morally and spiritually. In the context of Islamic education, the aspects of faith and morals are two main elements that complement each other and cannot be separated. Faith is the basis of a Muslim's belief in Allah SWT, while morals are the real manifestation of faith that is firmly embedded in the heart. Therefore, instilling the values of faith and morals from an early age is an urgent need amidst the current of globalization that is full of negative influences. The world of education must be able to become a strong fortress in keeping the younger generation on the right track in accordance with Islamic values.

Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) as one of the formal education levels in the Islamic education system in Indonesia has a strategic role in shaping the character of students. Through the subject of Akidah Akhlak, students are not only taught to understand the concepts of faith theoretically, but are also required to apply these values in everyday life. In the midst of increasingly complex challenges of the times, the need to strengthen education in akidah and morals is becoming increasingly urgent. Social reality shows moral degradation among adolescents, such as dishonest behavior, lack of respect for parents and teachers, and free association that is contrary to religious norms. This

indicates a gap in the education system, especially in the aspect of developing Islamic character.

The Aqidah Akhlak material taught in MTs grades 7, 8, and 9 has been systematically designed to shape students' personalities who are faithful, pious, and have noble morals. In grade 7, students are introduced to the basics of faith such as the definition of faith, the pillars of faith, and the importance of belief in Allah, angels, books, and apostles. In grade 8, their understanding begins to be directed towards the implementation of the aqidah through the habituation of commendable morals such as honesty, responsibility, and trust. While in grade 9, the material is expanded into a social context, such as the importance of having good morals in socializing, respecting differences, and being fair and trustworthy. This curriculum aims to instill strong Islamic values in the souls of students as provisions for facing the challenges of life.

However, in practice, not all educational institutions are able to implement the Akidah Akhlak curriculum optimally. Many factors influence the effectiveness of teaching this material, ranging from the availability of competent teachers, the learning methods used, to the social and cultural environment of students. In some schools, the teaching of Akidah Akhlak is still textual and does not touch on the emotional and spiritual aspects of students. This causes students to only understand religion by rote, without truly absorbing and experiencing the meaning of the values taught. As a result, there is a gap between the religious knowledge possessed by students and their behavior in everyday life.

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah, a public school located in a suburban area but has quite a lot of attention to character building for students. Although not a religious-based school like MTs, the school has integrated moral values into teaching and learning activities and school life in general. Through this research, the author wants to see to what extent the Akidah Akhlak material that is usually taught at MTs can be used as a reference or inspiration in character building for students in public schools. Thus, universal Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and compassion can be instilled in students from various backgrounds.

The selection of the research location at SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah was also based on the consideration that this school has a heterogeneous student composition, both in terms of economy, social, and culture. This provides challenges as well as opportunities in implementing character education based on faith and morals. In addition, teachers at this school also show enthusiasm in implementing a learning approach that emphasizes moral and spiritual values, although formally they do not use the term "Akidah Akhlak" as in the MTs curriculum. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, this study aims to explore the potential for integrating Akidah Akhlak values into general education, as well as to analyze the effectiveness of strategies used by schools in shaping student character.

The formulation of the problem in this study includes: first, how is the Aqidah Akhlak material for MTs grades 7, 8, and 9 semesters 1 and 2 arranged and developed according to the applicable curriculum? Second, how is the implementation of the Aqidah Akhlak values in the real lives of MTs students? Third, how is the relevance and possibility of implementing the MTs Aqidah Akhlak material in public schools such as SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah? Fourth, what factors support and hinder the process of internalizing the values of aqidah and morals in the educational environment?

This research is expected to provide a positive contribution in the development of the Akidah Akhlak learning model that is not only relevant for MTs, but can also be adopted by public schools in order to strengthen character education. With a contextual and applicable approach, it is hoped that students will be able to grow into individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also strong in faith and noble in morals.

Successful education is not just about producing graduates who excel academically, but also able to produce a generation that has moral integrity and social responsibility.

RESEARCH METHODS

Methodology This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach that aims to describe and analyze in depth how the Akidah Akhlak material for MTs grades 7, 8, and 9 semesters 1 and 2 can be implemented or reflected in the context of character building for students in a public school environment, in this case SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon holistically from the perspective of the subject being studied. This study does not aim to test a particular hypothesis, but rather focuses more on efforts to explore the meaning, understanding, and patterns of interaction that occur between teachers, students, and educational materials related to the values of akidah and akhlak.

In the qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of learning activities and social life in the school environment. Observations were conducted to see how the values of faith and morals were instilled in daily activities at school, both through the teaching and learning process and interactions between students and teachers. Interviews were conducted with several key informants, such as Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, principals, and several students who were considered to represent various backgrounds and characteristics. The purpose of this interview was to obtain more in-depth information about their perceptions, understandings, and experiences in shaping students' character through a religious values approach.

The main data sources in this study came from learning activities, school curriculum, and direct experiences of teachers and students. The researcher also analyzed related documents, such as syllabus, RPP (Learning Implementation Plan), and school regulations that contain moral and ethical values. All data obtained were then analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis techniques, namely identifying, grouping, and interpreting the main themes that emerged from the results of observations and interviews. The results of this analysis were used to see to what extent the values contained in the MTs Akidah Akhlak material can be used as a reference or applied in learning at SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah.

The validity of the data in this study is maintained through triangulation techniques, namely by comparing data obtained from various sources and methods to ensure the validity of the information. In addition, the researcher also rechecked (member check) the informant to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with the informant's intentions and experiences. With this comprehensive approach, the study is expected to be able to provide an accurate and meaningful picture of the potential for integrating Akidah Akhlak values in character education in public schools. This study is also an academic contribution to the development of learning strategies that are oriented towards the formation of students' morals and spirituality, which are very relevant to today's educational challenges.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study conducted at SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah showed that although this school is not a religious-based institution like a madrasah, the application of the values of faith and morals in learning activities and school life is quite good and structured. This is evident from the school's efforts to shape students' character through routine religious activities, the habituation of moral values, and the integration of

moral education in various subjects, especially Islamic Religious Education. Although it does not explicitly use the term or curriculum structure "Akidah Akhlak" as in MTs, the essence of the material is still reflected in daily educational practices.

In the observation process, the researcher found that religious activities such as congregational Duha prayer, reading of verses of the Qur'an before the lesson begins, and activities to commemorate Islamic holidays are part of the school culture that continues to be preserved. These activities function as a medium for internalizing the values of faith, such as strengthening faith in Allah SWT, fostering a sense of gratitude, and increasing student discipline in carrying out religious obligations. Moreover, Islamic Religious Education teachers are also active in providing students with an understanding of the importance of faith in life, although the time for religious learning in public schools is relatively limited compared to madrasas.

Through interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, it was found that most of the materials taught were similar to the Akidah Akhlak material used in MTs. Material on the pillars of faith, the obligatory characteristics of Allah and His messengers, and the concept of destiny and qada-qadar were taught gradually to students in grades 7 and 8. In grade 9, the material emphasized more on practicing moral values, such as the importance of being honest, fair, trustworthy, and helping each other in social life. Teachers used lecture methods, discussions, questions and answers, and contextual approaches to help students understand and relate the material to their daily lives. In practice, teachers also often raised examples of real cases that occurred around students so that learning felt relevant and left a mark on the heart.

In observing students, it was found that many of them showed attitudes and behaviors that reflected the values of faith and morals, such as respecting each other, being polite to teachers, helping friends in trouble, and maintaining cleanliness and order in the school environment. Although not all students are able to consistently apply these values, in general there is a growing awareness within them that noble morals are something important and must be realized in everyday life. This shows that even though they are not in a madrasah environment, internalization of religious values can still occur effectively if supported by a good character building system in schools.

On the other hand, challenges in implementing the values of faith and morals also still exist. Several teachers said that not all students have a religious family background or a social environment that supports the development of Islamic character. There are students who do not get enough attention at home, or live in an environment that tends to be permissive of deviant behavior. This is an obstacle in the process of instilling faith and morals because learning at school only lasts a few hours a day, while most of the students' time is spent outside the school environment. Therefore, teachers feel the need to take a personal approach to students who show deviant behavior or do not understand religious values.

In the context of the Akidah Akhlak material that applies in MTs, the researcher compared the curriculum structure with the material taught in SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah. The results showed that in substance, many core values can be adopted by public schools. For example, in the first semester of grade 7 MTs, students are taught about the importance of knowing Allah through the Asmaul Husana, faith in angels, and the habituation of commendable morals such as humility and patience. This kind of material can also be found in Islamic Religious Education teaching in SMP. The difference is, in MTs, the material is developed in more detail and depth. While in SMP, the delivery of these values is more general and not too focused.

From the results of interviews with the principal, it was obtained that the school had integrated character values into the vision and mission of education, which emphasized the importance of integrity, responsibility, and social concern. Although the

implementation did not always refer to the Akidah Akhlak material explicitly, the approach taken was in line with these values. The principal also said that they were very open to the development of a curriculum that could incorporate religious values into general subjects, as long as it did not conflict with the applicable national curriculum. This shows that there is an opportunity to use the Akidah Akhlak material as inspiration in developing a more systematic character development strategy in public schools.

Further discussion shows that the success of instilling the values of faith and morals is highly dependent on the synergy between schools, teachers, parents, and the community. Schools that have a religious culture and commitment to character education will find it easier to instill these values in students. Teachers also have a very important role as role models who provide a strong influence through their attitudes, speech, and daily actions. The teacher's exemplary behavior in being patient, honest, and respectful of students has a positive impact on the process of internalizing the values of faith and morals. Meanwhile, support from parents and the home environment is an external factor that cannot be ignored, because students' characters are formed not only at school, but also outside of class hours.

This study provides an overview that the values in the MTs Akidah Akhlak material can be applied flexibly in public schools, as long as there is a commitment from the school to shape students' characters holistically. Religious education is not only owned by madrasas, but is a need for all educational institutions, including public schools. Therefore, there needs to be a collaborative effort between madrasas and public schools in developing teaching materials, learning methods, and strategies for instilling values that are appropriate to the social and cultural context of students.

By looking at the practices that occur at SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah, it can be concluded that the integration of religious and moral values in general education is very possible to do, and can even be a solution in stemming the flow of moral crisis that threatens the current young generation. Through a contextual, dialogical, and exemplary approach, these values will be easier to understand, accept, and practice by students in their real lives.

CONCLUSION

Faith and moral education is an important foundation in forming a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually and morally strong. In the world of Islamic education, the Aqidah Akhlak material has been systematically designed for MTs grades 7, 8, and 9 as a guide in developing the character of students. The material includes strengthening aspects of faith and practicing noble morals in everyday life, with the main goal of forming students who are faithful, pious, and have noble morals. In the context of today's education, the need to instill these values is increasingly urgent, especially when we face various moral challenges among teenagers triggered by the negative influence of globalization and advances in information technology.

This study was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach that attempts to describe in depth how the values contained in the MTs Akidah Akhlak material can be applied or reflected in character education in public schools, namely at SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah. Through data collection techniques in the form of observation, interviews, and documentation, researchers obtained information about how the values of faith and morals are instilled in learning activities and in the school culture in general. Although this school does not formally use the MTs curriculum, the spirit and essence of the Akidah Akhlak values are still present and play an important role in shaping students' personalities.

The results of the study indicate that the process of fostering faith and morals can be carried out well in public schools as long as there is a commitment from the school and

teachers in implementing these values consistently and contextually. At SMP Negeri Tempat Tanamerah, values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and discipline are part of the school culture that is built through religious activities, the habituation of commendable attitudes, and exemplary behavior from teachers. Although not all students show perfect implementation of these values, in general there is awareness and effort to become a better person, which is an indicator of the success of the character education process.

In the discussion, it was found that the MTs Akidah Akhlak material has great potential to be used as a reference in developing character development strategies in public schools. The values taught in the material are universal and can be adapted to the context of non-madrasah formal education. With the support of the right method, a learning approach that touches on emotional and spiritual aspects, as well as exemplary behavior from teachers and a conducive environment, the instillation of akidah and akhlak values can take place effectively even outside the madrasah. This study proves that character education based on Islamic values is not exclusively owned by religious institutions, but can be implemented widely at all levels of education as part of an effort to produce a generation with integrity, faith, and dignity.

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