**BUILDING STUDENTS’ POSITIVE CHARACTER THROUGH WRITING SHORT STORIES IN ONLINE LEARNING**

Susiati, Djoko Srijono, Sally A. Jarin, Avelia Yonanda Exaputri, Belva Amalia Destaty

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

Email: [sus249@ums.ac.id](mailto:sus249@ums.ac.id)

**Abstract**

This research aims to develop a model for building students’ positive characteristics through short stories in online learning to fulfill the absence of character education during learning in the pandemic COVID-19 era. Using research and development, this research employs 8 Junior High Schools in Java, Indonesia comprising state and private schools with religion and non-religion based schools. Literatures on curriculum and phrase books were analyzed. This leads to a result that there were opportunities to involve short stories during online learning activities. A conceptual model will be designed and experimented in schools.

Key words: curriculum, character education

**Introduction**

Since March 2020, Surakarta city has been declared as a KLB (Extraordinary Event) area since July 2020. Surakarta city has been designated as a black zone of coronavirus because Covid-19 cases continue to increase to 8,000 as of January 1, 2021 (JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data, 2020). This causes impacts on the learning process from PAUD level to higher education to change from physical class and blended learning into 100% online meeting. Junior High School (SMP) and Senior High School (SMA) use the curriculum 2013 which includes the assessment of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In online learning, year-on assessments and skills can be easily measured by assessment rubrics by the school team or teaching teachers. However, for attitude assessment, there seems to be an obstacle because the teacher cannot observe the student's attitude directly, especially if the learning is conducted through giving assignments.

The challenge of building characters in children in online learning as revealed by Nur (2020) is at least two: first, students lose role models, namely teachers; second, the use of digital technology as an online learning tool cannot guarantee students are safe from the impacts of negative contents on social media. This is fatal because it will end up with the down of morals and character crises. Atmazaki et al. (2020) stated that in addition to intra-curricular activities, strengthening students' character education can be through extracurricular and non-curricular activities. However, these activities are only effective if they are conducted in person or physical meetings. The effectiveness of character education needs to be done because as the research conducted by Budiani and Sholikhah (2020) that character formation such as discipline and responsibility has a significant influence on student learning outcomes. Looking at these problems, researchers are interested in researching how character education can be achieved through online learning. This research will be limited to the development of character education of Junior High School students. The reason for choosing Junior High School level is because at this stage, students are in the transition from childhood to early adolescence when positive characters are effectively built. Therefore, the character of Junior High School age needs to be guided for becoming more behaved individuals.

There have been many studies conducted related to strengthening character education in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Intania and Sutama (2020) revealed that character education during the COVID-19 pandemic plays an important role to foster self-confidence and student responsibility, especially in doing school work. Purnomo, Mansir, Tumin, and Suliswiyadi (2020) suspect that the difficulty of developing students' character during online learning is because teachers and students have not been able to fully adapt to remote classroom methods. Asrivi (2020) stated that to be able to immerse the values of student discipline, scout extracurricular activities can be done while paying attention to health protocols. However, this is rather difficult to do if the status of an area for COVID-19 is a black zone. Aswadi and Kasmilawati (2020) added that digitalization-based education such as the use of gadgets for students is very necessary to foster the positive character of students. In his research, Santika (2020) implemented a portfolio-based multiple intelligences character education strategy. Multiple intelligences were initiated by Gardner (2013) which includes linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, visual-spatial intelligence, musical (musical intelligence), body/kinesthetic intelligence, natural intelligence, social (interpersonal intelligence), and intrapersonal in intelligence.

Instead of using learning theory, Abdusshomad's (2020) Islamic character values are related to maintaining cleanliness by washing hands, wearing masks, and covering their mouths when sneezing and coughing. Ni‟mawati, Handayani, and Hasanah (2020) stated that the management of character education can be done in three ways, namely collaboration between schools and parents, utilization of Technology and Information (ICT), and Problem Based Learning (PBL). Purandina and Winaya (2020) added that the synergy between teachers and parents in guiding students with affection, interacting, and activities together can positively develop religious values, discipline, creativity, independence, responsibility, and curiosity to students. However, these studies are still descriptive and there are no trials to learners with the model. This research uses a Research and Development (RnD) approach to design character education models in online learning, piloting and evaluating them.

Teachers are role models for students both during the teaching and learning process in the classroom and outside the classroom. Shaughnessy and Boerst (2018) state that there are at least three main capitals that a teacher must do: skills to learn, skills to build, and approaches that do not need to be learned. This is done especially for novice teachers. Richmond (2017) says a teacher must be able to face challenges in the classroom, school, and community. These include the challenges of the needs of the times and the use of information technology. Nevertheless, novice teachers and more experienced teachers can interact with each other to share experiences (Richmond, Bartell, Floden, and Petchauer, 2017). For example, a junior teacher who generally prefers the use of learning technology can help senior teachers who are less good at using learning technology. On the contrary, senior teachers who are more experienced in terms of methods and teaching materials can be mentors for junior teachers. Activities like this can help shape their professional identity (Richmond, Bartell1, Floden, and Jones, 2020).

Related to its role in strengthening student character, a teacher based on the 2013 curriculum that emphasizes developing values of attitude, knowledge, and skills can design learning that can build the positive character of students. Floden, Richmond, and Andrews (2017) provide examples of activities given to students by discussing a short story by revealing the characters. In distance learning, short stories can be given by using digital storytelling at the same time to practice listening and creative thinking (Tabieh et al., 2020). According to Lestari, Ahmadi, and Rochmad (2021), comics can also be a means to build critical thinking skills and student characters. However, Andrews and Richmond (2019) are reminded to keep providing humane learning for students. The learning remains principled in 21st century learning namely 4Cs (Creativity, Critical Thinking, Communication, and Collaboration). Atun and Latupeirisa (2020) provide examples of collaboration skills and creative thinking can foster the character of students in the face of earthquake disasters. Sanches-Ferreira et al. (2020) stated that there will be differences between students who tend to "run away" and those who are not in the face of a problem. In addition to 4Cs, teachers should certainly refer to learning that is HOTS (High Order Thinking Skills) (Amin and Ikhsan, 2020). Therefore, teachers are central figures in helping to direct students to build their positive character by not forgetting the principles of 21st-century learning and HOTS in addition to of course mastering technology (Kartowagiran et al., 2020) especially in carrying out distance learning.

In distance learning, one of the challenges faced by parents is the use of gadgets by students. Here the role of parents is very important in mediating emerging problems such as cyber-bullying and the misuse of technology (Giménez, Luengo and Bartrina, 2017). Melero, Villalon, and Magaldi (2020) state that family involvement can help build a good attitude and confidence in learning. According to Garcia, Babarro, and Toldos (2019), students' attitude to learning in the classroom departs from the experience of students in the home. How parents and other family members behave towards the student. Parenting style directly or indirectly affects student learning success (Nwosu et al., 2020). Latipah, Kistoro, and Putranta (2021) then concluded that students' attitudes in managing their learning are influenced not only by peer support and students' perception of the teacher's acceptable attitude towards them but also the role of parents.

Parents are required to play an active role to build the positive character of students in assisting their children in learning. In distance learning, Raguindin, Lising, and Custodio (2021) propose a strategy of collaboration between school and home in this case is parents in directing students' attitudes to achieve academic achievement. Lopes, Silva, Oliveira, Sass, and Martin (2017) mention that the less good student behavior in learning, the more energy the teacher wastes in the classroom. Therefore, the role of parents at home is very important in minimize bad behaviors of students. Balaguer, Orejudo, Rodríguez Ledo, and Moreno (2020) state that positive parenting patterns can improve students' positive personal development and build student self-reliance. There are several factors from parents that can influence the transformation of students' attitudes in learning, namely the background of parental work, time dedicated to the child, the way of parenting, and the expectations of parents towards the child (Soto and Tomasimi, 2018). Therefore, the family factor is very important in the formation of the positive character of the students.

COVID-19 has changed the education system a lot since its inception in early 2020. Almost the entire learning process is done remotely or online. The use of technology is a major obstacle for teachers, students, and even parents (Richmond, Bartell, Floden, and Nathan D. Jones, 2020). Related to this, there needs to be an understanding that there are barriers between school and home in distance learning (Richmond, Bartell, Cho, Gallagher, He, Petchauer and Curiel, 2020) thus hindering the process of student character development. In other words, COVID-19 is a difficult time for education due to significant barriers to online learning, cognitive, social, and emotional transitions (Richmond, Cho, Gallagher, He, and Petchauer, 2020). There is a distance in learning, there is also the distance in the delivery of values of attitudes, years, and skills while according to Virtic, Dolenc, and Sorgo (2021), attitudes are the most difficult to build through online learning.

Hence, it needs an alternative way to build students’ character in online learning mainly by making use the instruments and institution provided. One of the opportunities to pursue this model is through English course in writing skill. This study aims to develop character education models in online learning, review character education models in online learning, revise character education models in online learning, test character education models in online learning, evaluate character education models in online learning, disseminate character education models in online learning and evaluate the replication results of character education model implementation in online learning.

The urgency of this research is the lack of effectiveness of character strengthening in students during online learning which can lead to a decrease in the morality of students, especially junior high school students as they age transition from the golden age to adolescence. The role of parents is very important in the formation of student character in the period of growth. However, the synergy between teachers and parents is not yet known. To achieve attitude values in the 2013 curriculum that can support students' values and skills, good cooperation between teachers, parents, and other related parties is needed. Therefore, a character education model is needed to strengthen the character of students in online teaching and learning activities.

**Methodology**

**Research Subject and Location**

The subjects of this study were students of junior high schools in Surakarta, Central Java based on general, religious, and economic parents of learners. Sampling in these schools is due to the possibility of diversity in the implementation of character education applied in schools with their respective school backgrounds despite using the same curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum. This study will specifically take grade VII. The consideration of taking the subject of grade VII learners is because the learner is in the transition from childhood to adolescence where the positive character that has been formed in elementary school must be maintained. For the selection of locations in Central Java is to consider internet access that is not lame between one region with another area on the island of Java.

**Technique of Collecting Data**

Data collection in this study using questionnaire and interview techniques. Questionnaires are used to obtain information related to the views, attitudes, and actions of learners about strengthening character education in online learning. The interview technique is used to explore information from teachers and parents regarding the model of character learning education in online learning.

**Types and Source of Data**

The data type in this study is verbal data created by teachers and parents to be the main material in designing character education models in online learning and to revise learning models. The next type of data is the test result of the character education model in online learning in the form of views, attitudes, and actions of research subjects related to strengthening positive character during distance learning.

**Findings and Discussion**

**Basic Competence**

In curriculum 2013, there are three competencies that must be developed namely knowledge, skill and behavioral competencies which can be built through intracurricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. These behavioral competencies consist of spiritual and social behavioral competencies. For grade VII, knowledge area intends to give insights on social function, generic structure and language features of interpersonal and transactional interactions, descriptive texts and song lyrics. Whereas, in the skill area, students are directed to infer the meaning and create a product of the knowledge they have been given. Behavioral competencies are commonly inserted within learning activities accompanying the other competencies. The behaviors to promote are honesty, discipline, responsibility, caring (tolerance, working together), politeness and confidence. These behaviors imply spiritual and social values which can be considered to builds students’ character.

**The Structure of the Text Book**

4.2 The Text Book Structure

The seventh-grade book begins with chapter I, love the environment, in which there is a sub-theme 1 love the environment that divided into

Activity 1

modeling observation report text; task 1 building context, task 2 recognizing the observation report text, task 3 recognizing the structure of the observation report text, and task 4 understanding the word in the text.

Activity 2

The preparation of observation report text in groups; task 1 labeling and decrypting; task 2 sort text items; task 3 understanding the linguistic element; task 4 understanding the environment through literature.

Activity 3

The preparation of the observation report text individually; task 1 interviewing parents or siblings; task 2 search for writing in the media; task 3 identifying the linguistic elements; and task 4 finding folklore individually.

Sub-theme 2 is the preservation of marine biota with the contents

Activity 1

modeling the text of the observation report; task 1 building context; task 2 recognizes the text of the observation report; task 3 recognizing the text structure of the observation report, and task 4 understanding the linguistic element.

Activity 2

The preparation of the observation report text in groups consisting of task 1 understanding the main idea; task 2 create a summary; and task 3 create a dialog.

Activity 3

The preparation of the observation report text individually that are consisting of task 1 create a description; task 2 identifying the main idea, and task 3 writing the observation report text.

Chapter II introduction to Indonesian culture with sub-theme 1 saman dance.

after the presentation of saman dance, the book is followed by activity 1 modeling the description text. Description text modeling contains task 1 of constructing context, task 2 recognizing the description text, and task 3 recognizing the structure of the description text.

Activity 2 arranging the description text in groups that are containing task 1 identifying and labeling, task 2 composing the description text, and task 3 working on linguistic questions.

The next activity is activity 3, self-composting the description text filled with task 1 searching and identifying text, task 2 composing the description text, and task 3 working on linguistic problems.

Sub-theme 2 with the title traditional market consists of activity 1 description text modeling. Description modeling consists of three tasks: task 1 building context, task 2 recognizing the description text, and task 3 recognizing the structure of the description text.

furthermore, the book is packed with activities 2 preparation of description text in groups consisting of three tasks, that are task 1 complete the description text, task 2 composing the description text, task 3 working on linguistic problems,

activity 3 self-drafting of the description text, task 1 searching for and identifying the description text, task 2 composing the description text, and task 3 working on the linguistic question, and let us discuss.

Chapter III youth and character education with sub-theme 1 youth and character education.

Sub-theme 1 is divided into activities 1 modeling exposition text that is elaborated again with task 1 building context, task 2 recognizing the exposition text, task 3 recognize the structure of the exposition text.

activity 2 preparation of exposition text in groups, task 1 sorting elements of exposition text, task 2 recognizing linguistic elements, task 3 writing exposition text, task 4 understanding character education through poetry.

Activity 3 composing the text individually, task 1 composing the exposition text, task 2 marking the exposition text, and task 3 marking the linguistic question.

The book continues with sub-theme 2 the increase of public reading interest and eradication of illiteracy consisting of 1 exposition text modeling activity.

Activity 1 is subdivided into tasks 1 building context, task 2 recognizes exposition text, task 3 recognizing the structure of exposition text, task 4 understanding the linguistic elements.

Activity 2 preparation of exposition text in groups, task 1 identifying the main idea, task 2 expressing opinions, task 3 making exposition text, and activity 3 preparation of exposition text individually.

Activity 3 consists of task 1 expounding facts, task 2 presenting text, and task 3 writing exposition text with a theme.

The next book is chapter IV, appropriate technology. This chapter is divided into sub-theme 1 appropriate technology and community economic empowerment which is outlined in activity 1 modeling exposition text. exposition text modeling is divided into three tasks, task 1 building context, task 2 recognizing exposition text, and task 3 recognizing the structure of exposition text.

Furthermore, activity 2 preparation of exposition text in groups consists of three tasks, that are task 1 complete the text of exposition, task 2 composing the text of exposition, task 3 working on linguistic problems.

activity 3 preparation of the exposition text independently, task 1 finding and identifying the exposition text, task 2 composing the exposition text, and task 3 working on linguistic problems.

sub-theme 2 in chapter iv with the title of food self-sufficiency and appropriate technology. This sub-theme is divided into activities 1 modeling the text of the exposition divided into task 1 build context, task 2 recognizing the exposition text, and task 3 recognizing the structure of the exposition text.

Furthermore, activity 2 preparation of exposition text in groups divided into, task 1 complete the task, task 2 composing exposition text, and task 3 work on the language problem.

Activity 3 composing the exposition text individually that are divided into tasks 1 finding and identifying exposition text, task 2 composing exposition text, and task 3 performing linguistic tasks

Chapter V natural events with sub-theme 1 tsunami that are divided into activities 1 modeling explantation text,

activity 2 preparation of explantation text in groups,

activity 3 preparation of explantation text individually, task 1 building context, task 2 recognizing the explantation text, task 3 knowing the structure of the explantation text, activity 2 preparation of explantation text in groups, task 1 composing the explantation text in its own words, task 2 understanding the linguistic elements, task 3 composing the explantation text, and task 4 understanding the explantation text through literature.

Furthermore, activity 3 preparation of the explantation text is independently divided into task 1 composing the explantation text about natural events, task 2 interviewing a person, and task 3 understanding natural events through poetry.

Sub-theme 2 earthquake contains activity 1 modeling of explantation text. Activity 1 contains task 1 of building context, task 2 of recognizing the text of the explantation, task 3 of recognizing the structure of the explanation text.

activity 2 preparation of explantation text in groups, task 1 understanding the main idea and composing the explantation text, task 2 understanding the linguistic elements, and task 3 composing the explantation text in order and logical. Activity 3 self-drafting of the explantation text consists of task 1 composing the exposition text and task 2 interviewing a person.

Chapter VI is Indonesian short stories are used to talk about the preparation of short stories. chapter vi consists of sub-theme 1 butterfly mom with activities 1 modeling short story text, task 1 building context, task 2 recognizing short story text, and task 3 understanding the structure of short story text.

Activity 2 preparation of description response text in groups includes, task 1 completing the description text, task 2 composing the description text, task 3 working on linguistic question,

activity 3 self-drafting of description text, task 1 searching and identifying description text, task 2 composing description text, and task 3 working on linguistic questions.

Sub-theme 2 historical tour: short story Prambanan temple used in activity 1 short story text modeling. Activity 1 is divided into, task 1 building context, task 2 recognizing short story text, and task 3 recognizing the structure of short story text.

The next activity is 2 grouping of short story text divided by task 1 completing the short story text, task 2 composing the short story text, and task 3 working on linguistic problems.

Furthermore, activity 3, composing short story text is individually that are divided into, task 1 is to find and identify the text of the short story, task 2 is to compose the short story text, and task 3 is to work on the language problem.

Chapter VII introduction, monitoring, and understanding of different types of text consists of sub-theme 1 garbage tratment,

Activity 1 text modeling, Task 1 building context, Task 2 recognizing text, and Task 3 recognizing text structure.

activity 2 text type conversion, task 1 understanding converting explantation text into observation report text, and task 2 understanding converting explantation text into exposition text.

Activity 3 Converting different types of text in groups, Task 1 converting the text "Negative and Positive Side of Mobile Phone" into explantation text, Task 2 converts the text "Negative and Positive Side of Mobile Phone" into observation text, and task 3 converts the text "Negative and Positive Side of Mobile Phone" into exposition text.

The contents of the book continue with, sub-theme 2 Folklore "Lebai Malang", Task 1 finding the text structure of "Lebai Malang", task 2 changing the text "Lebai Malang", and task 3 discussing the text changes of "Lebai Malang".

Chapter VIII analysis, summary, and revision. the first step is to analyze the text by deciphering the characteristics of the text and then being given the task of analyzing the text. Next, fill the book with subtitles summarizing the text. Before entering the activity, summarize the text described, the material related to providing a summary definition, the steps of summarizing the text, the task of summarize the text, revise the text, the steps of revising the text, and the task of revising the text.

**Opportunities of Using Short Stories as Learning Activity to Build Character Education**

* Curriculum and Text Book Support

There are opportunities found in the curriculum and text book to assign students to write their experience of implementing moral values they have found in the short stories to build their character during online learning. In the curriculum, it has been mentioned that in the basic competence, students are required to compare, infer the contextual meaning related to the social function, generic structure and language features and compose a descriptive text. The language features used comprise simple present tense, adjective and linking verb. These language features play very important role to the model of building character education through writing a short story of daily routine since this type of text has the same language features to use.

In the text book, there are found in chapter III about “what time is it” which enables the materials to learn and write daily activities. This supports the model which makes use students’ experience of implementing their moral values by writing them into a short story containing their daily routines.

* Students’ Condition

This research takes place in 7 Junior High Schools in Surakarta with varsities of state schools which are more varied in students’ ethnicity, religion and social status background and private schools with religion and non-religion based schools which also vary from ethnicity and social status background. This diverse background affects how the students perceive online learning, character education they implement at home and how parents build their personality traits in daily life. This will also influence students’ different abilities in writing short stories of their daily routine based on the moral values they have implemented referring to the stories they have read before. Students’ high performance on this can be achieved through optimizing learning activities from knowledge and skill competencies.

* Teachers’ Roles

Teacher is the main role model for students in the classroom. In this model, teachers introduce existing short stories both from Indonesia and abroad. Then the teachers give an assignment to the students to withdraw the positive values contained in the short stories based on spiritual and social behaviors. From this values the students have inferred, the teachers assign the students to implement the values in their daily routines. To measure whether the students really implement the values, the teachers assign the parents to observe using portfolio template given by the teachers. Finally, the teachers assign the students to write a short story based on the results of the parents’ observation.

* Parents’ Roles

Parents play very important role in this model. Parents live together with the students that they observe the students more freely and genuinely. In every three weeks, parents are required to observe their children of implementing the spiritual and social values having been inferred from the short stories given by the teacher. In the end, parents report their observation to the teacher using the template given by the teacher.

Conclusion

This model fulfills the drawback of the curriculum implementation during online learning as spiritual and social behavioral competencies have been reduced. This model presents as the co-curricular for English course of Junior High School grade VII. However, this model can be flexibly used for another for example for writing recount text in grade VIII as this kind of text may contain students ‘personal experience.

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