



Teacher Strategies in Installing Independent Character in Elementary School Students in Learning

Elvianora¹, Anggarwati Riscaputantri², Jimoh Azeeh Ade³

¹Department of Mathematics Education, Muhammadiyah Teacher Training College, Sungai Penuh, Jambi, Indonesia

²Faculty of Education & Psychology, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

³University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to analyze teacher strategies in instilling independent character in students in Elementary Schools.

Methodology: A qualitative approach with descriptive design was used in this study, with a population of teachers at elementary schools Terbangsari I selected by purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Main Findings: The results of the study showed that project-based learning strategies, small group discussions, and active parental involvement through digital communication were effective in increasing student independence. The main challenge faced by teachers was the habit of students relying on teacher direction. Teachers overcame this by providing individual guidance and rewards to encourage student motivation.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The novelty of this research lies in the integration of project-based learning strategies with reflective activities and direct parental involvement in character learning in Elementary Schools.

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Corresponding Author:

Anggarwati Riscaputantri,
Faculty of Education & Psychology, Yogyakarta State University,
Jl. Colombo No.1 Karangmalang Yogyakarta 55281 Indonesia
Anggarwati12@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Character education is one of the main focuses in the world of education in Indonesia, especially at the Elementary School level. This is in line with the goals of national education as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, namely to develop the potential of students to become people who are faithful, pious, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, creative, independent, and responsible [1]-[3]. In this context, instilling an independent character is one of the important aspects that must be instilled from an early age, considering that independence is the main capital to face increasingly complex future challenges [4]-[6].

Elementary Schools have a strategic role in shaping students' independent character. At this time, children are at an optimal stage of development to receive positive character values [7], [8]. Teachers as learning agents have a great responsibility to ensure that the learning process is not only oriented towards cognitive achievement, but also towards the formation of student character [9]-[11]. Teacher strategies in learning in Elementary Schools must be able to create a learning environment that supports and stimulates students to develop their independence.

Student independence can be built through various approaches, methods, and learning strategies. Teachers need to design learning that provides opportunities for students to think critically, make decisions, and be responsible for the tasks given [12]-[14]. However, in practice, there are still challenges in instilling independent

character in elementary school students, especially in building consistency between learning at school and support at home [15], [16]. Therefore, a deep understanding is needed of how teacher strategies can be optimized to effectively instill students' independent character.

Based on initial observations conducted at elementary schools Terbansari I elementary schools, it was found that most students tended to rely on teacher direction in completing learning assignments. In addition, many students showed difficulty in taking the initiative and solving problems independently. This shows that the learning strategies implemented have not been fully able to stimulate student independence. Teachers still predominantly use lecture methods and assignments without guidance that motivates students to think critically and creatively.

Previous research has shown that the application of certain learning strategies, such as project-based approaches, problem-based learning, and group discussion methods, can have a positive impact on the development of students' independent character. Project-based learning can improve students' ability to work independently and responsibly [17], [18]. However, these studies are still limited to certain contexts and have not specifically explored the most effective strategies at the elementary school level [19].

This study offers novelty in terms of the approach taken to instill students' independent character. In this study, a learning strategy model was developed that combines contextual and character-based approaches by involving students' active roles in the learning process. This study also integrates reflective activities that aim to increase students' awareness of the importance of independence in learning and everyday life [20], [21]. With this approach, it is hoped that it can provide new contributions to the world of education, especially related to efforts to instill the independent character of Elementary School students.

Thus, this study aims to explore and identify effective strategies in instilling the independent character of Elementary School students. The results of this study are expected to not only provide practical benefits for teachers in designing learning, but also provide a theoretical basis for the development of educational policies that are more oriented towards the formation of student character.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive study design. This approach was chosen to understand in depth how teachers' strategies in instill students' independent character at elementary schools Terbansari I. The main focus of this study is to reveal the experiences, views, and practices carried out by teachers in the learning process to form students' independent character [22], [23].

The population in this study were all teachers who teach at elementary schools Terbansari I. From this population, the research sample was determined using a purposive sampling technique, namely the selection of informants based on certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives [24], [25]. The criteria used include teachers who have more than three years of teaching experience and are actively involved in learning that is oriented towards developing student character. With these criteria, a sample of grade 4 teachers was obtained as the main informant.

The research instrument used was a semi-structured interview guideline. This guideline is designed to explore in-depth information related to the learning strategies implemented by teachers, the challenges faced, and the efforts made to instill students' independent character. Interviews were conducted directly with each informant at the research location. In addition to interviews, researchers also conducted field observations to enrich data related to the context of ongoing learning [26], [27].

The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification. In the data reduction stage, researchers organize and filter data from interviews and observations to identify information that is relevant to the focus of the study [28], [29]. The data presentation stage is carried out by compiling data in the form of narratives, tables, or diagrams to facilitate interpretation [30]. Finally, drawing conclusions and verification is carried out by compiling the main findings and checking their validity through data triangulation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews conducted with a sample of teachers in 50 elementary schools in the environmental embankments, the results were obtained as in table 1 below.

Table 1. Interview Results

No	Questions	Teacher's Answer
1	What learning strategies do you use to instill students' independent character?	Teachers often use project-based learning strategies, where students are given group assignments that require initiative and responsibility.
2	What are the main challenges in instilling independent character in students?	Many students tend to rely on teacher direction and are less accustomed to making decisions on their own."

3	Do you involve parents in the process of instilling students' independent character?	Yes, teachers often communicate with parents through WhatsApp groups to ensure support at home.
4	How do you deal with students who find it difficult to be independent in learning?	Teachers provide more intensive individual guidance and motivate students to try to solve problems on their own.
5	What activities do you think are most effective in instilling independent character?	Small group discussion activities and independent presentations really help students to be more confident and responsible.
6	Do you give awards to students who demonstrate independence?	Yes, we give small rewards, such as praise in front of the class or award stickers.
7	How do you measure the development of students' independent character in the classroom?	Teachers use observations during the learning process, as well as record changes in student behavior over time.

The results of interviews with teachers at elementary schoolsn Terbansari I provide an overview of the strategies and challenges faced in instilling students' independent character. Teachers revealed that project-based learning strategies are often used to encourage students to learn actively and independently. In this learning, students are given group assignments that require them to work together, take initiative, and be responsible for their work. Activities such as small group discussions and presentations are also mentioned as effective methods for building students' self-confidence and individual responsibility.

However, teachers identified several challenges in this process. One of the main challenges is the habit of students who tend to rely on teacher direction and lack the courage to make decisions independently. To overcome this, teachers provide individual guidance, especially to students who are having difficulty, and motivate them to try to complete tasks or problems without direct assistance. The role of parents is also considered important in supporting the instillation of students' independent character. Teachers admit that they actively involve parents, especially through communication in WhatsApp groups, to ensure that character learning that begins at school is continued at home. With parental involvement, students get consistent support in building their independence.

Awards are also used as a way to encourage students to demonstrate an independent attitude. Teachers give awards in the form of praise in front of the class or award stickers as a form of appreciation for student efforts [31]. This award is considered effective in motivating other students to try harder to be independent in learning. In measuring the development of students' independent character, teachers rely on direct observation during the learning process. Teachers record changes in student behavior over time, both in terms of courage to take the initiative, ability to complete tasks without assistance, and responsibility for the tasks given [32], [33]. With this approach, teachers can monitor the extent to which the strategies implemented have succeeded in instilling independent character in students.

The results of this study indicate that the teacher's strategy in instilling independent character in students at elementary schoolsn Terbansari I has a significant impact on the formation of students' independent attitudes. Strategies such as project-based learning, small group discussions, and independent presentations help students to dare to take the initiative, work together, and be responsible. In addition, parental involvement through active communication also strengthens the formation of student character outside the school environment. Giving awards in the form of praise or small incentives increases students' motivation to continue learning independently. This impact is not only seen in the learning process, but also in the daily behavior of students who become more confident and dare to make decisions.

This study supports previous research findings that show that project-based learning strategies and discussion approaches can improve students' independent character. Project-based learning can significantly improve students' initiative and responsibility [34], [35]. In addition giving rewards encourages students to be more active and independent in learning [36]. However, previous research tends to focus on higher education levels or on certain subjects. In the context of Elementary Schools, this study provides additional evidence of the effectiveness of these strategies in building students' independent character.

The uniqueness of this study lies in the integration of project-based learning strategies with reflective activities and direct parental involvement through digital communication. There are not many previous studies that combine these strategies in the context of learning in Elementary Schools. In addition, this study highlights the importance of a holistic approach, where the formation of student character is not only carried out by teachers in the classroom, but also involves parents as active partners at home. Thus, this study provides a new contribution in the field of character education, especially in instilling independence in elementary school students.

The results of this study can be implemented in daily learning practices in Elementary Schools. Teachers can use project-based learning strategies by giving assignments that require students to work independently or in small groups. In addition, teachers need to actively involve parents through easily accessible communication media, such as WhatsApp groups, to ensure support at home. Reflective activities can also be integrated into learning, where students are invited to evaluate their learning process and understand the importance of

independence in life. Giving simple rewards, such as praise, can be additional motivation for students to continue to demonstrate an independent attitude.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that project-based learning strategies, group discussions, and active parental involvement are effective in instilling students' independent character at elementary schools Terbandsari I. Teachers who utilize these strategies successfully encourage students to be more confident, responsible, and independent in the learning process. Giving simple rewards is also an important factor in motivating students to continue developing their independence. This study recommends that further research explore similar strategies at other levels of education or in certain subjects to strengthen these findings in a broader context.

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