Character Development through the Mileniial Amil Project: A Learning Experience at SMP Islam Al Azhar 15, Cilacap

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Abstract. Social studies education is a subject that can foster student character development and enhance learning outcomes. Social studies education provides students with knowledge and skills in various aspects of social life, including history, geography, economics, and politics. However, in reality, social studies education is still often dominated by lecture and memorization methods, which are less effective in developing students' character and creativity. Lecture and memorization methods make students passive and less engaged in the learning process. Furthermore, this method does not encourage students to think critically and creatively. The impact of the pandemic on student character has resulted in an increasing level of ignorance and indifference towards others, particularly due to the intensive use of technology, especially cellphones. A creative social studies learning model is a learning model that employs various learning methods and strategies to encourage students to be active, think critically, and creatively. Therefore, a creative project-based social studies learning model is necessary to enhance student character and learning outcomes. Interviews and questionnaires. This millennial Amil project is a collaborative effort involving various parties, including parents and the community that will be the beneficiaries of the activity project. The support of these parties is crucial for the success of this program, particularly the support of the jamiyyah as a representative of parents or guardians of students. In this activity, students will gain valuable insights into Islamic religious education, social studies, civics, English, Indonesian, and ICT. The project aims to cultivate students' character traits such as caring for others, empathy, and fostering a sense of gratitude. Additionally, it encourages lifelong learning for students.

Keywords: Character, millennial Amil project, creativity, project based learning, social studies.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, education is paramount to equip students with the necessary skills to navigate the challenges of the 21st century. These skills encompass critical thinking and problem-solving, effective communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation (Rusadi, Widiyanto, & Lubis, 2019). Among the critical skills that must be cultivated during education is student creativity (Alzoubi et al., 2016). Creativity refers to the ability of students to generate novel ideas, approaches, or models to address complex challenges. Character plays a pivotal role in enabling students to confront the multifaceted challenges of globalization. Individuals with strong character exhibit honesty, discipline, responsibility, and a commitment to environmental stewardship. Conversely, learning outcomes foster critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and innovation.

Wena (2015: 14) asserts that the Project Based Learning (PBL) model is an instructional approach that facilitates classroom management through project-based learning. Project-based learning entails complex tasks derived from challenging questions and problems, prompting students to engage in design, problem-solving, decision-making, investigative activities, and independent work. Global SchoolNet (2000) presents the findings of a research study conducted by the AutoDesk Foundation on the defining characteristics of PBL. The study identified the following key characteristics of PBL: (1) Learners make decisions regarding the learning framework, (2) A problem or challenge is presented to learners, (3) Learners design the learning process to determine the solution to the problem or challenge, (4) Learners collaborate to access and manage information to solve the problem, (5) The evaluation process is continuous, (6) Learners periodically reflect on their activities, (7) The final product of the learning activity is subject to continuous evaluation. The introduction is capitalized and provides a background description of the current state-of-the-art research.

The final product of the learning activity will be evaluated qualitatively, provided that the learning situation is tolerant of mistakes and changes (Global SchoolNet, 2000). Project-based learning is an approach that empowers students with the freedom to plan their learning activities, collaborate on projects, and ultimately produce work products that can be presented to others.

Social studies learning is one of the subjects that can foster student character and learning outcomes. Social studies learning provides students with knowledge and skills pertaining to various aspects of social life, including history, geography, economics, and politics. However, in reality, social studies learning is still often dominated by lecture and memorization methods, rendering it less effective in developing students' character and creativity. Lecture and memorization methods render students passive and less engaged in the learning process. Furthermore, this method does not encourage students to think critically and creatively. The pandemic has had a detrimental impact on students' character, leading to an increasing level of ignorance and indifference towards others, exacerbated by the increasingly intensive use of technology, particularly cellphones.

A creative social studies learning model is a learning model that employs various learning methods and strategies to encourage students to be active, think critically, and creatively. Therefore, a creative project-based social studies learning model is necessary to enhance students' character and learning outcomes.

The primary objective of this study was to ascertain the impact of project-based learning (PBL) as a learning model on student character development and academic outcomes. The research findings have several significant benefits: For Students: This study provides valuable insights into the effects of PBL-based social studies learning on student character and learning outcomes. By engaging in project-based learning, students gain direct experience in cultivating essential social skills and fostering empathy towards others. For Teachers: The research serves as a valuable resource for teachers seeking to develop creative social studies learning models that enhance student character and academic performance. It offers practical guidance on implementing effective teaching strategies and techniques. For Schools: This research contributes to the ongoing development of effective learning strategies for schools. By implementing the Amil Millennial program, schools can enhance their student character development and foster a nurturing school environment. The program can serve as a pilot initiative for other schools, promoting positive change and improvement. For Other Researchers: This study serves as a foundation for further research exploring the influence of social studies learning models on student character development and academic outcomes. It provides valuable insights that can be utilized in future studies to enhance educational practices and improve student outcomes.

Character refers to the inherent qualities and behaviors that define an individual's personality and actions in daily life. It plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's future prospects. Positive character traits, such as integrity, responsibility, and empathy, can lead to successful outcomes and fulfillment in life. Conversely, negative character traits, such as dishonesty, irresponsibility, and lack of empathy, may hinder personal and professional growth. (Ads & 2020, Addtl. 2019)

Character can be interpreted as a set of thought patterns and behaviors that guide an individual's life and interactions within various social contexts, such as the family, school, community, and country. Individuals with well-developed character possess the ability to make sound decisions and accept the consequences of their choices (Mukhlas, 2012). The primary objective of character education is for educators to master this discipline so that they can effectively guide and facilitate students, fostering positive character development and enabling them to apply these principles in their daily lives.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Culture outlines the objectives of character education as follows:

1) Nurturing and developing students' potential to instill positive values and character traits that align with cultural and national identity.
2) Reinforcing and enhancing students' existing positive behaviors, integrating them with universal values and religious cultural traditions.
3) Preparing students to assume leadership roles and become responsible citizens, embodying a sense of trust, honesty, strength, and a strong sense of community.
4) Creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment that fosters a positive learning atmosphere, enabling students to develop essential skills and competencies.

Character refers to a consistent pattern of behavior that an individual exhibits. Good character is characterized by honesty, discipline, responsibility, and a caring attitude towards the environment. As outlined by Suprijono in Thobrues (2016, 20), character is shaped by a combination of actions, values, attitudes, understanding, appreciation, and skills acquired through education. The outcomes of education enable individuals to compete effectively in various aspects of community life, requiring skilled human resources.

The project-based learning (PBL) model possesses the potential to enhance students' learning experience and develop their diverse skills. PBL generally facilitates a meaningful learning process, enabling students to construct their knowledge within the context of their own experiences and through direct learning experiences. This approach supports the development of essential skills. The project-based social studies learning model encompasses the entire process of project planning, culminating in the creation of a product. It is anticipated to enhance students' creative thinking abilities (Wena, 2019).

Project-based learning (PBL) is a strategic approach that can enhance various competencies, including academic achievement, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, independence, and the ability to perceive situations from a broader perspective. PBL is one of the learning models that utilizes real-world problems as a context for students to acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills while gaining essential knowledge and concepts from the subject matter. PBL learning is also expected to provide solutions to real-world problems by generating ideas or creating products through the utilization of the existing environment. PBL learning entails the following steps: determining fundamental questions, designing project plans, developing schedules, monitoring learners and project progress, testing results, and evaluating experiences.

The project-based learning model was selected due to its involvement of students in complex problems and real-world challenges. This model allows students to select and determine problems or issues that are personally relevant to them. Furthermore, in project-based learning, students are required to utilize investigation, research, planning, and problem-solving skills when completing the project. Project-based learning enhances student engagement, fosters creativity, and transforms the teacher into a facilitator. The teacher evaluates the student's performance based on the project outcomes (Sosilowati, 2013). Iariani & Puspitasari (2015) elucidated that Project-Based Learning (PJBL) is a learning model that empowers teachers to manage classroom learning through project-based activities. This perspective posits that project-based learning is a student-centered learning model that positions the teacher as a facilitator. Consequently, project-based learning facilitates the development of students' creativity and motivation.

METHOD

The research methodology employed in this study adheres to the qualitative approach. The study population comprises all ninth-grade students enrolled at Al Azhar 15 Cilacap Islamic Middle School, totaling 104 students. The research sample specifically focuses on the class of Al Maarij students within this institution. The research sample was gathered through a random sampling process, ensuring a representative representation of the population. It is important to note that all ninth-grade students at SMP Islam Al Azhar 15 Cilacap possess the same academic abilities, and there is no distinction between superior or inferior classes.

The research instrument utilized in this study is a questionnaire designed to assess character formation, with a particular emphasis on the development of caring and collaborative traits, creativity, and motivation. Data collection techniques employed in this research include interviews and questionnaires. A test is a method employed to collect data, typically administered by presenting a series of written questions, usually

in the form of essay questions, to respondents. However, in this study, the researcher will employ descriptive questions to gauge the extent of the activity's impact on character formation. Another research instrument employed is documentation, which utilizes media such as goods or images as a source of research data.

The data analysis technique employed in this study involves quantitative descriptive analysis of questionnaire results, observations, and student grades. The indicators of the research's success are the presence of concerns and collaboration, creativity, and motivation among the students, with a minimum threshold of 80%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students with a high level of concern, collaboration, creativity, and motivation to learn are evident in their learning activities. They demonstrate an extra effort to care for others, excel in collaborative projects, enhance their creativity, and maintain high motivation. Students with high learning motivation are also evident in their interactions when given project assignments, demonstrating their ability to complete them effectively. High learning motivation fosters a more productive learning environment and significantly impacts critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills are evident in students when they present their findings and solve problems encountered during project implementation. The millennial model employed in the learning process presents its own challenges for students. Various critical questions, answers, reasoning, assessing, criticizing, analyzing, disseminating, and creating arise from students. Millennials excel in learning projects not only because they enhance students' understanding of the material but also because they develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and foster a sense of caring, collaboration, creativity, and motivation. These factors collectively contribute to a more effective and learner-centered learning process.

Project-based learning conducted by Class IX students at Al Azhar 15 Cilacap Islamic Junior High School has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in fostering character development, particularly in cultivating caring and collaborative attitudes. This approach extends beyond student interactions, involving teachers as well, enabling them to facilitate assessments more efficiently.

The Millennial Amil Project is a collaborative initiative involving LAZ, Al Azhar, an armil raikat institution serving as a laboratory for student character development through partnerships with schools. The program commences with the socialization of LAZ Al Azhar's initiatives with all ninth-grade students. Subsequently, students form groups and select projects aligned with their interests, subject to mutual agreement.

Following group discussions, students propose action plans, create schedules, and disseminate them. When students actively participate in activities, teachers provide necessary support to ensure their success and enhance the focus on character development.

The Millennial Amil Project involves multiple stakeholders, including parents and the community, who serve as the primary beneficiaries of the activity. Collaboration with these parties is crucial for the program's success, particularly the involvement of janwyyah representatives or parents' guardians.

Through project activities, students derive valuable insights from Islamic religious education subjects. They create fliers showcasing a selection of hadiths or Quranic verses, demonstrate social studies knowledge through community interactions during donation distribution, and enhance their Indonesian language proficiency by presenting proposals and preparing activity reports. Additionally, the ICT value is recognized through the utilization of technology, applications, and adherence to the project's theme. Civic education encompasses cooperation among students engaged in various activities, both before and after the project, through interviews and questionnaires focused on character development. It is evident that the caring character exhibited by students during the Millennial Amil project is directly influenced by their involvement in the community. This involvement fosters a sense of empathy and gratitude, as students witness the conditions and the impact of their actions. The heart touched by this experience has a profound and lasting effect on its continuation. Students develop a deeper sense of gratitude for the community, which is often vastly different from their own. When students participate in productive waqf projects, they promptly make donations by bringing goats or chickens to the designated location. This approach not only generates creative economic ideas but also serves as a catalyst for further innovation. Students who choose to visit orphanages, social institutions, nursing homes, or places where parents are separated from their children or family members demonstrate a heightened focus on both parents. This heightened attention leads to a more

pronounced implementation of filial piety. The development process is facilitated through a series of activities that promote social interaction, direct student-target interaction, and lifelong learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Millennial Amil activity is a highly effective project designed to enhance students' sense of awareness, collaboration, creativity, and motivation. Through the analysis of questionnaires and interviews conducted with Class IX students, it was evident that the importance of assisting others and collaborating became increasingly significant and was essential in all activities. Students demonstrated their creativity when working on projects with innovative ideas, which subsequently motivated them to learn and assist others by completing assignments. The project aims to foster a culture of caring for others, which will serve as a lasting positive memory for students. Furthermore, the project has made a significant impact on the lives of many individuals, enabling them to develop lifelong learning skills that are more beneficial and student-centered.

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