



Journal of Blended and Technical Education

Vol 01 (1) 2024 p. 10-19

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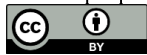
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Received 15 November 2024;

Accepted 29 November 2024;

Published 14 December 2024.

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Conflict of interest statement:

Author(s) reported no conflict of interest

DOI: [http://doi.org/10.70764/gdpu-jbte.2024.1\(1\)-02](http://doi.org/10.70764/gdpu-jbte.2024.1(1)-02)

INTEGRATION OF SPIRITUAL VALUES IN THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM TO BUILD AKHLAQUL KARIMAH CHARACTER

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to explore the integration of spiritual values in the hidden curriculum within educational environments, with a focus on fostering character development that aligns with Islamic principles. This will ultimately enhance spiritual intelligence and noble character (*akhlaqul karimah*) in learners.

Research Design & Methods: This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to gather data. The research explores how the hidden curriculum influences students' spiritual and moral growth outside of the formal curriculum and the role of spiritual values in shaping character.

Findings: The findings reveal that the hidden curriculum plays a significant role in students' spiritual and moral development beyond the formal curriculum. Spiritual values such as faith, piety, gratitude, and empathy are integrated into everyday experiences, guiding students to internalize moral and ethical principles. This integration fosters a supportive educational environment that encourages students to develop positive behavior, respect for others, and a sense of responsibility toward themselves and their environment.

Implications & Recommendations: The study suggested that schools integrate spiritual values in educational practices, train educators to facilitate a hidden curriculum, create an environment that supports students' spiritual and social growth, and involve families and communities in character development.

Contribution & Value Added: This study reveals the vital role of the hidden curriculum in fostering students' spiritual intelligence and character, emphasizing the integration of spiritual values to develop morally grounded and academically competent individuals, and provides practical guidance for educators.

Keywords: Character Education, Hidden Curriculum, Spiritual Intelligence

JEL codes: I20, I21, Z12

Article type: research paper

INTRODUCTION

Character education is an important element in the formation of a young generation with integrity. Character education has a significant role in shaping individual morals and ethics. Character education is important from an early age to develop an attitude of discipline, responsibility, and independence, which later affects a person's moral quality (Mulyadi, 2020). Character education not only includes moral learning but is also related to the development of social awareness and the ability to take responsibility in social life (Liu et al., 2021). Character education

is not only taught in the scope of formal education, but the family and the surrounding environment also play an important role in this matter.

In the context of education, the integration of moral values is very important because it can result in individuals who are not only intelligent but also have a strong ethical foundation (Hermawan & Kusniasari, 2023). Hidden Curriculum becomes one of the tools and methods to increase knowledge and spiritual character building for students outside of formal materials. In this context, the Hidden Curriculum, namely values, attitudes, and habits that are transmitted indirectly through the school environment, plays an important role in developing spiritual intelligence for students. Hidden curriculum plays a role in instilling ethical values and virtues based on the example of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Hidden Curriculum roles as an important integrator in building students' *akhlaqul Karimah* personality through spiritual values that are not explicitly stated in the formal curriculum. These values include prayer habits, religious ethics, and moral behaviour that are internalised through daily school activities such as congregational prayer, memorisation of the Quran, and discipline. Research shows that Hidden Curriculum instils spiritual values such as responsibility, honesty, and obedience, shaping students into noble individuals (Hanny, 2020). Including these values in students' daily activities is very important in building good moral character, which is not only visible in the school environment but can also be implemented in social life (Hanny, 2020).

Theoretical references such as the Prophet Muhammad's hadith and Quranic verses emphasize the importance of good morals as part of spiritual intelligence. *Akhlaqul Karimah* is the core of spiritual intelligence, which is the ability to develop harmonious relationships between humans and God, fellow humans, and the environment. Abu Ya'la narrated from the hadith of Anas, which was attributed to the Prophet SAW, that one of the characteristics of the most perfect believers is those who have the best morals among others. The hadith confirms that one's perfection is not only seen based on one's level of spirituality in worship alone but also based on relationships between fellow humans and the environment. Allah has also said in QS Al-Qalam (68:4), which reads:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

Meaning:

“And indeed you (Muhammad) are of excellent character.”

(QS. Al-Qalam, 68:4)

The verse shows that *akhlaqul Karimah* is one of the main characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who became a role model for his people. Many Prophetic Hadiths discuss the importance of morals. One of the most relevant traditions is the words of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which reads:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

Meaning:

“Verily, I was sent to perfect noble character.” (HR. Ahmad)

This hadith confirms that the main mission of the Prophet Muhammad SAW is to improve and perfect the morals of his people, and good morals are an integral part of the teachings of Islam and are a reflection of spiritual intelligence.

In the current era, efforts to build students' character with good character face several challenges. Many cases involving students related to character deviations show that there are serious problems in character education in schools. Where there is a gap between the expected character education and the reality of student behaviour, for example, there are alarming phenomena among students such as fights between students, promiscuity, sexual behaviour, abuse of alcohol, drugs, and other addictive substances, to bullying and bullying, both physically and

online (Mashuri, 2021). In addition, there is a lack of parental involvement. Not all parents are able to understand and are willing to supervise the process of applying the values provided at school, and the students' living environment is less supportive (Febrianti, 2023). An integrated approach to learning is often hampered by a lack of resources and effective pedagogical strategies (Arifin et al., 2023). In addition, insufficient time allocation and diverse student behaviour are also inhibiting factors (Syaikhudin, 2022). Another challenge is the inconsistent application of formal and informal values, so students often have difficulty understanding the meaning of moral values in the context of everyday life.

In Indonesia, for example, there are many cases of student character deviations that reflect a moral crisis among the younger generation. Based on the report "Indonesia Drug Reports 2023", in 2022 there were around 4.8 million cases of drug users, with the majority of cases occurring among teenagers in East Java and Sumatra, with the most frequently used type of drug being narcotics, indicating the dominance of users from the productive age group (Lubis et al., 2023; Pidada et al., 2021). According to UNICEF in 2023, Indonesia ranked 4th in the world with the number of cases of child marriage. According to the Indonesia Judicial Research Society (IJRS), between 2019 and 2023, 95 per cent of marriage licence applications to religious courts and local courts were granted, and one-third of the reasons given were due to pregnancy before marriage. Addressing these issues requires collaboration between schools, parents and communities to create an environment that supports students' positive character development, through education that emphasises moral and ethical values and engagement in activities that build a sense of social responsibility.

It is important to note the integration of moral values in education, a comprehensive approach, including education, law enforcement, and social support, should be considered to address this issue effectively. Through the hidden curriculum, it is imperative to shape a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has good character in accordance with Islamic principles. As such, education is expected to contribute to reducing social problems such as fighting between students, bullying, and early marriage, as well as preparing a better generation for the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hidden Curriculum

Park et al., (2023) explained that hidden curriculum is defined as the teaching and learning process that occurs outside the formal curriculum. It includes knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, values, and beliefs that students acquire consciously or unconsciously through social interactions and experiences in the educational environment. Hidden Curriculum refers to the informal and unintentional lessons that occur in the school environment. Even though it is not included in official guidelines, it plays a role in shaping individuals and society through unwritten norms, beliefs and behaviours that influence the acquisition of professional skills (Ortega B et al., 2014).

Hidden curriculum refers to values, norms and behaviours that are not formally taught in the official curriculum, but are indirectly learned by students through social interactions and daily activities in the school environment. The study shows that the hidden curriculum has a significant role in shaping students' identity and morality, in addition to reinforcing ethical norms such as honesty and hard work. In addition, the hidden curriculum can also reinforce the existing social structure in schools, which has an impact on how students understand their social roles.

Hidden curriculum includes elements of implicit learning that occur outside of the curriculum explicitly delivered by teachers, yet still have a significant impact on learners' professional development (Neve & Collett, 2018). For more than three decades, the concept of hidden curriculum has been used to describe the effects of tacit learning, which includes how cultural factors, organisational structures, and educational institutions contribute to the formation of students' professional identity (Martimianakis et al., 2015). Hidden curriculum, thus, involves aspects that are not always reflected in teaching materials or teaching methods, but have an important influence on the attitudes, values, and norms that learners receive in the professional education setting.

Character Education

Character education can be defined as a structured effort to instil ethical and moral values in the younger generation through various approaches. From the literature review, the purpose of character education is to form individuals who have good, ethical, and moral traits (Akhnaf et al., 2024; Anggara et al., 2019). In the prototype analysis of character education, McGrath et al., (2022) emphasised that the purpose of character education is to improve individuals' ability to make good decisions and reflect moral values through daily actions. Character education plays a role in helping students internalise ethical and moral values in their lives. Character education is defined as a multidimensional process that aims to form individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have strong moral integrity, ethics, and positive values to face the challenges of the times.

From an Islamic perspective, character education consists of integrating the desired values and character traits into every subject taught. The aim of this approach is to produce graduates who have good character and are in accordance with Islamic (Alimron et al., 2023). The implementation of character education in Islam focuses on the development of moral values and good character, integrated into learning through interactive methods and examples from religious teachings, the Qur'an and relevant hadith that can help students understand the importance of good character in everyday life. With this approach, graduates are expected to apply these values in order to produce individuals who are intelligent, ethical, and able to contribute positively to society. Character education is also considered an endeavour to build a solid ethical foundation, develop intelligence, and encourage an entrepreneurial spirit, which is reflected in the concept of Gusjigang (Asror et al., 2024; Sutikno et al., 2023).

Based on several studies, character education plays a role in helping students internalize ethical values, such as honesty, discipline and empathy, which are very important in everyday life. The process of character education does not only occur through formal lessons, but also through hidden curriculum practices, such as habituation of positive behaviours, development of moral attitudes, and social interactions in the school environment. With effective implementation, character education can create individuals who have a high awareness of social norms, respect differences, and have the potential to become agents of positive change in society (Aghni et al., 2020; McGrath et al., 2022).

Akhlaqul Karimah

Akhlaqul karimah, or noble character, is a very important concept in Islamic ethics and morals. It encompasses commendable behaviour, attitudes and character in accordance with Islamic teachings. Various studies have examined the significance of *akhlaqul karimah* in various contexts. In daily life, the application of *akhlaqul Karimah* has ethical value in social interactions, including in terms of high moral values (Jannah, 2021). Imam Al-Ghazali explained that *akhlaqul karma* refers to praiseworthy traits that need to be instilled in children from an early age through moral education, character development, and self-training (*mujahadah-riyadhah*) to form the desired behavior. This explanation highlights the importance of character development from childhood.

The importance of *akhlaqul karimah* is also seen in pesantren education, where the focus is not only on cognitive intelligence but also on affective and psychomotor aspects. The implementation of a vision that prioritizes *akhlaqul Karimah* has been proven to increase classroom spirit and student understanding (Rostini et al., 2020). Several studies have suggested that the development of *akhlaqul Karimah* involves various approaches, including role modeling, advice, motivation, punishment, reward, habituation, and supervision (Khoiriyah, 2022). In addition, the integration of the Prophet Muhammad's character model is also applied as a framework for developing *akhlaqul Karimah*, which includes values such as honesty, kindness, patience, humility, and justice (Susilawati et al., 2024). In a broader perspective, the Qur'an addresses *akhlaqul karimah* through three key aspects: education, marriage, and trade (Mufidah & Encung, 2023). This confirms that *akhlaqul Karimah* has a significant relationship with various dimensions of human life.

Building *akhlaqul karma* through spiritual values in the hidden curriculum involves creating a holistic learning environment that nurtures students' moral character alongside their academic

activities. This can be achieved through various methods such as exemplary behaviour from teachers, daily religious practices, and extracurricular activities that reinforce Islamic values and ethics (Nashihin & Zaini, 2023). In this context, teachers become role models who encourage students to develop good morals, while religious practices such as reading the Koran and praying in congregation can create a spiritual atmosphere that supports character development. Extracurricular activities based on social and humanitarian values, such as Social work programs, such as social work and environmental programs, also help students understand the importance of compassion and empathy towards others. Therefore, incorporating spiritual values into the hidden curriculum not only improves academic performance but also strengthens the moral foundation of learners and makes them people of moral character who are ready to face the challenges of society.

METHODS

The research method used involves a qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods are often used in studies that examine hidden curriculum and character development. This approach provides an opportunity to conduct an in-depth exploration of the complex processes involved in the integration of spiritual values and character building. The data collection techniques used are:

a. Observation

Observations are made to directly observe daily activities at school that may not be listed in the formal curriculum but significantly impact student character building. In a hidden context, things such as interactions between teachers and students, daily student behaviour at school, how the class is managed, and the overall school culture can be observed.

b. Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the understanding and views of various stakeholders (teachers, students and parents) regarding the integration of spiritual values in the hidden curriculum. This method allowed the researcher to understand how teachers teach spiritual values outside of formal learning and how students internalize them.

c. Documentation

Documentation acts as additional data to support the results of observations and interviews. These sources of documentation can include school policies, written rules, extracurricular programs, and records of religious and social activities at the school. The documents provide a deeper insight into how the school designs and implements educational programs that contain spiritual values.

RESULT

The hidden curriculum plays an important role in building spiritual intelligence and fostering noble character (*akhlaqul Karimah*) in learners through unplanned experiences in the educational environment. Through daily interactions in the educational environment, such as the way teachers behave, the values applied, and the school culture formed, learners can learn about ethics, morals and spirituality. This process indirectly shapes students' character and reinforces positive values that support the development of spiritual intelligence and virtuous behaviour. Thus, the hidden curriculum has a significant contribution to holistic character education.

Spiritual values implemented in the hidden curriculum in spiritual schools often include the development of a sense of responsibility towards others, respect for moral values, and an appreciation of the deeper meaning of life. These educational institutions implicitly instill spiritual values through various daily activities, social interactions and manners practiced by all school members. Habituation to worship, reminders of the importance of prayer, and maintaining the sanctity of intentions and actions are part of the experiences that shape learners' spiritual personalities. In this way, educational institutions act as a medium to educate students not only to excel academically but also to have a strong spiritual foundation and noble character in their daily lives.

Table 1. Program Hidden Curriculum

Program	Aspects and Forms of Hidden Curriculum	Impact on Spiritual Intelligence
An-Nahdliyah	Reading, Memorisation, and Practice (<i>Tahlil, Wirid, Al-Barjanji, Al-Quran, Sholat</i>)	Building spiritual awareness and Islamic character-building
Ta'lim Muta'alim	Reading	Increase awareness of moral and spiritual responsibility in the learning process
Asma'ul Husna	Reading	Encourage a person to internalize high moral and ethical values
Infaq	Donation	Building generosity, sincerity, and a caring attitude toward the social environment
Reading and Writing the Quran	Reading and Writing	For individuals with good character and high spiritual intelligence.

Implementation of the Hidden Curriculum Program in Building Character that is *Berakhlaqul Karimah*

The implementation of the hidden curriculum program in building good character involves integrating moral and ethical values into daily activities at school, without being explicitly stated in the formal learning plan. Through examples of teacher behaviour, school culture and interactions between fellow students, values such as honesty, responsibility, simplicity and mutual respect can be instilled naturally. In addition, a supportive school environment, such as the habit of respecting time, rules that encourage discipline, and social activities that foster empathy and concern for others, indirectly shape student character. Thus, hidden curriculum plays an important role in creating an educational environment that encourages students to internalise and practice noble morals (*akhlaqul karimah*) in everyday life.

The following is an explanation related to the hidden curriculum programme, including the following:

a. An-Nahdliyah

The implementation of the An-Nahdliyah programme focuses on integrating Islamic values in education with a comprehensive approach and focuses on developing students' character and spiritual intelligence. The program combines formal and non-formal learning methods, including religious instruction, moral development, and social activities that involve community participation. By implementing a curriculum based on Nahdlatul Ulama teachings, the program highlights the importance of values such as tolerance, justice and mutual respect in everyday life. The involvement of parents and the community is also one of the main strategies to create an environment that supports the development of good character. The An-Nahdliyah program includes various spiritual activities aimed at developing character and spiritual intelligence, such as prayer practices, recitation of the Quran, tahlil, and Al-Barjanji, as well as wired recitation practices. The results of this implementation show that students gain not only solid academic and religious knowledge but also develop positive attitudes and behaviors that are in line with Islamic teachings.

b. Ta'lim Muta'alim

The implementation of the Ta'lim Muta'alim program as an effort to shape character with good character emphasizes the adab and ethics in the process of studying, which is expressed through the principles contained in the book. The program teaches students to have sincere intentions, respect teachers, and develop patience and discipline in learning. In addition, Ta'lim Muta'alim encourages students to understand that studying is not just about mastering the material but also about developing good character and morals. By internalizing values such as honesty, humility and gratitude, learners are guided to behave in line with Islamic principles in their daily lives. Through this ethics-focused learning approach, the Ta'lim Muta'alim program plays a role in shaping individuals who have not only intellectual intelligence but also

noble morals that have a positive impact on social interaction and life in society. The implementation of this program is carried out before learning is carried out, in addition to reading and also understanding the meaning and content of Ta'lim Muta'alim as a learning guide in studying.

c. Asma' ul Husna

The implementation of the Asmaul Husna recitation program before the learning process is an effective step in shaping the character of *berakhlauq Karimah* among students. By starting each learning session by reciting the great names of Allah, students are reminded of the good qualities contained in Asmaul Husna, such as compassion, justice, and wisdom. This activity not only creates a peaceful and blessed atmosphere before learning but also instills moral and spiritual values that can motivate students to emulate Allah's character in their daily lives. In addition, the recitation of Asmaul Husna also serves to raise students' spiritual awareness, helping them to internalize values such as empathy, peacefulness and mutual respect. In this way, the program contributes to the formation of individuals who not only excel academically but also have good morals and are ready to interact positively in the social environment.

d. Infaq

The implementation of the infaq program as a character building effort focuses on the development of caring, empathy and social responsibility among students. In this program, students are invited to actively participate in sharing activities, either through donations of money or goods, aimed at helping those who are less fortunate. This infaq activity provides not only direct benefits to the recipients but also instills altruistic values in students, such as simplicity, gratitude, and sincerity in giving. In addition, this program invites students to understand the importance of sharing and helping others as part of their social responsibility as individuals with good morals. Thus, through this infaq practice, it is hoped that students can internalize these values, which will be seen in their daily attitudes and behaviors, and form individuals who have strong character and are committed to making a positive contribution to society.

e. Reading and Writing the Quran

The implementation of the Read and Write Al-Quran program serves as a tool to build character by instilling spiritual and moral values contained in the Al-Quran in students. This program invites students to learn to read and write the Quran correctly and understand its meaning and message. In this learning process, students are given an understanding of the importance of good morals, including values such as honesty, patience, and respect for parents and others. This activity not only strengthens students' bond with the holy book but also internalizes these values into their daily lives. By getting used to reading and writing the Quran, it is hoped that students will be able to apply the teachings of Islam in every aspect of their lives, thus creating individuals with strong character and good manners, ready to make a positive contribution to society.

DISCUSSION

Based on the implementation of the hidden curriculum program described above is expected to produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has strong ethics and morals. Table 2 shows that the spiritual values integrated into the hidden curriculum to build a character that is *berakhlauq Karimah*.

Table 2. Spiritual Values

Spiritual Values	Implication
Faith and Devotion	Faith and devotion become a solid foundation in shaping individuals with good character. Faith and devotion are two important aspects of student character education. Faith, as a belief in religious teachings and God, forms an individual's spiritual identity and encourages a sense of responsibility towards oneself, others, and the environment. Whereas devotion is a tangible manifestation of faith

Spiritual Values	Implication
Caring for others	reflected in daily behaviour, where students try to live in accordance with religious teachings and apply values such as honesty, simplicity, and integrity. The integration of the value of caring in the hidden curriculum is essential for building character, by teaching students to be empathetic and aware of the needs of others, thus contributing to a more harmonious society. Activities such as infaq and social service not only strengthen relationships between individuals, but also deepen social awareness.
Spiritual Discipline	Spiritual discipline, with practices such as prayer, praying and reading the Quran, is crucial in helping students build closeness to religious values to strengthen their morals and spirituality. The application of this discipline not only enables students to understand religious teachings in theory, but also to apply them in their daily lives, thus forming a stronger character and preparing them to face life's challenges with a positive attitude. By internalising spiritual values, students become more optimistic, tolerant and able to manage emotions and stress. Spiritual discipline therefore contributes significantly to students' personal development and helps create a more civilised, compassionate and respectful society.
Gratitude	Gratitude can help students to appreciate what they have more, reducing consumptive and materialistic attitudes. Internalising gratitude motivates students to excel in academics and other activities, which support the formation of good character. Overall, developing gratitude has a positive impact on individuals and creates a better environment in schools and communities.

CONCLUSION

Character education is an important aspect in forming a young generation with integrity. In the midst of the rapidly developing modern era, the challenges in forming the character of students with noble morals are increasingly complex, especially with the increasing influence of social media and global culture that sometimes conflict with local and spiritual values. The hidden curriculum plays a role in instilling ethical and virtuous values through the school environment that are not explicitly stated in the formal curriculum. Theoretical references such as the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and verses of the Quran emphasize the importance of good morals as part of spiritual intelligence. However, in the current era there are challenges in building the character of students with noble morals, such as cases of character deviations that reflect a moral crisis among the younger generation. To overcome this problem, collaboration between schools, parents, and the community is needed. through strong synergy between various parties and the implementation of education that emphasizes moral and ethical values based on hidden curriculum programs such as An-Nahdliyah, Ta'lim Muta'alim, Asmaul Husna, infaq, and Reading and Writing the Quran, By instilling values such as faith, piety, gratitude, and empathy, students not only gain academic knowledge but are also guided to internalize moral and ethical principles in everyday life. It is expected to produce a generation that is intellectually intelligent and has good morals with spiritual values such as faith, piety, caring, spiritual discipline, and gratitude. So that they are able to face global challenges while still adhering to noble moral and ethical principles.

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