Innovation of Islamic Religious Education Learning with Social Emotional Learning Approach to Improve Character

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This article aims to examine the superiority of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning model with a social-emotional learning approach (SEL) to strengthen efforts to shape student character. The analysis is carried out inductively with an in-depth literature study to discover the PAI learning model design with the SEL approach in order to shape student character. The conclusion shows that PAI learning model innovation with a social-emotional approach (SEL) must be completed holistically to foster emotional and social intelligence. Holistic learning takes place when the PAI curriculum can display themes that encourage the authentic exploration of events. A meaningful learning process will take place through authentic themes, and the design material will be interrelated with various fields of development that exist in the PAI curriculum. Holistic learning is based on an inquiry approach, where children are involved in planning, exploring and sharing ideas. Education forming character has a higher meaning than moral education since it does not only teach what is right or wrong but also instils good habits. It leads students to understand (cognitive domain) what is right or wrong, positive value (affective domain), and willingness to complete a task (psychomotor domain). The moral dimensions include willingness, conscience, values, attitudes, and ethical behaviour.

Keywords: Character building, social-emotional learning, good character
Introduction

During this time, the Islamic Religious Education learning process in primary schools tends to be taught verbally with a doctrinal approach. Islamic learning style is more likely to adopt cognitive intelligence over emotional and social intelligence. Children are more valued due to ranking and test scores, so that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects cannot carry out the function of socialisation and dissemination of good values to students. As a result, educators have not been able to develop the affective aspects of guidance that refer to the formation of character, as a result of the school learning process.

Students’ moral behaviour decreases the norms of cultural and religious norms (Marzuki, 2008). The decline of students’ moral behaviour and attitudes is experienced at all levels of education, especially at the elementary school level, because it is the foundation of primary school education. Other research (Khilmiyah, 2011) on two pilot primary schools also shows that elementary school students are currently experiencing behavioural problems in the form of bullying, low respect for teachers and parents, low co-operative attitude, insufficient skills in dealing with conflict, highly individualistic attitudes, decreased honesty (Suud, 2018) and responsibility, lack of independence, creativity and self-confidence. It takes place from Education that does not influence affective aspects, therefore numerous students do not reflect good behaviour.

Student ability in the field of affective skills development is also low, both in intrapersonal (D. Park, et. al., 2017) and interpersonal abilities (Brabcová, et. al., 2015), leading to the development of poor character. It is evident from students’ lack of ability to cope with conflict, the low student empathy, little tolerance attitude and so on. As a result, this article is intended to examine the Islamic Religious Education learning model, which is carried out using the SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) approach to strengthen the character formation of elementary school students.

The Urgency of SEL for Character Building

The results of previous studies (Zamroni, 2005) indicate that 70% of participants succeed in their lives not from intellectual and vocational intelligence, but due to general intelligence, which is demonstrated through personal and social abilities such as cooperation and the ability to understand others. The results also indicate that affective education has a significant positive effect on personality development, which include respecting others, being able to find alternative solutions to problems, being creative, patient and independent (Zuchdi, 2010). Good character and success is developed not only from intellectual intelligence (Kroll et. al., 2019), but also emotional (Moazamnia, et. al., 2020) (intrapersonal) and social
(interpersonal) intelligence. Both types can affect the type of behaviour that will be undertaken in interacting with one’s self and others (Shearer & Karanian, 2017).

Therefore, it is necessary to improve the learning process of Islamic Religious Education to achieve the primary goal of education, which is the formation of a person with good character. The education system needs to be reconstructed so that it can produce graduates who are more qualified and ready to face the future “world”, which is full of challenges, and produce graduates who have exemplary character traits behaviour. These quality graduates will be able to play a role on a personal, local, national and global level. It is of concern that awareness without integration between the affective and cognitive aspects, feelings and thoughts, or remembrance, will not be able to develop humans who have scientific knowledge and a charitable disposition.

The cognitive and affective separation will cause various problems in human life (Nunner-Winkler, 2015). Cognitive and affective cohesiveness can be achieved by creating an environment that allows everyone to experience the gaining a satisfactory standard. In the context of learning, teachers need to realise the importance of integration between cognition and affection (Dunkel, Nedelec, & Van der Linden, 2018) and use various teaching methods to achieve these goals. One of the techniques to overcome the improvement of education is to implement a learning process that develops affective aspects in order to shape exemplary character. The culture of national and reputable character can be interpreted as a quality of life that develops based on religious and national values, reflected through daily behaviour.

Therefore, the teacher's task is not merely to convey the subject matter, but more importantly prepare students to be able to build lives and solve future problems. This can be undertaken by developing students' personalities, which include emotional and social intelligence through the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) approach. Through this approach, the development of students' affective aspects in the learning process can be completed by training students to develop intrapersonal (Valor, Antonetti, & Merino, 2020) (emotional intelligence) and interpersonal skills (social intelligence). Intrapersonal skills are related to developing self-management abilities, whereas interpersonal skills (Critcher, Helzer, & Tannenbaum, 2020) relate to developing the ability to establish interpersonal relationships.

Studies regarding the effectiveness criteria of learning (Critcher et. al., 2020) in schools involve five characteristics. They include: (1) a conducive school environment for learning (Suud, Madjid, & Sutrisno, 2019); (2) teacher expectations and beliefs that students can achieve anything; (3) emphasis on basic skills and maximum time allocated to students’ tasks; (4) an instructional (learning) system that has a clear link between objectives, monitoring and assessment; and (5) the principal's leadership which provides incentives for learning (Sutton, 2020). These five factors are prerequisites for an effective learning process, and their
implementation must still be seen through the design of learning in the form of an appropriate strategy and a conducive learning climate.

Learning effectiveness can be achieved when the principal has a strong vision of character (Lickona, 1996). The principal must have moral leadership by (1) introducing all school staff to the goals and strategies of character education (Suud, 2018); (2) seeking support and participation from parents; (3) reinforcing character values in interactions conducted with school staff, students, and parents. The teacher has the role of a caregiver, mentor, and role model. Therefore, in educating characters, a teacher must display behavior that reflects good character and applies methods that can encourage children to develop good character.

Based on the above, this paper maintains that it’s essential and strategic to develop children’s emotional and social intelligence through strengthening intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Strengthening of social and emotional skills can increase the development of students’ character. The SEL role scheme for the development of PAI quality is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. The Role of SEL for Quality Improvement of PAI**
SEL for PAI Learning Model Design

In the context of the Indonesian education system, character education highly connected Islamic Religious Education, as outlines in the Competency Standards and Basic Competencies of Islamic Religious Education for good behaviour contained in the Curriculum of Islamic Religious Education subjects for SD/MI from the Ministry of National Education (Koesoema, 2010). As shown in Table 1 innovative learning is required for competency standards and basic competencies of PAI and to support the optimisation of achieving and forming good character. Improving the quality of education can be pursued through improving the quality of learning (Rahayu, Parta, & Rahardjo, 2016). Thus, an effective learning system will encourage students to learn and motivate them to apply the content of PAI.

Table 1: Standard and Basic Competencies of PAI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Behaviour Competency Standards (Morals)</th>
<th>Values in Basic Competence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade I</td>
<td>Honest, responsible, disciplined, clean, diligent, helpful, respectful, civilised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade II</td>
<td>Humble, modest, civilised, polite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade III</td>
<td>Confident, determined, thrifty, loyal, hard-working, compassionate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade IV</td>
<td>Follow the Prophet’s example: Adam, Muhammad SAW, Ibrahim, Ismail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade V</td>
<td>Follow the Prophet’s example: Ayub, Musa, Isa. Follow Khalifa’s example: Abu Bakar, Umar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade VI</td>
<td>Avoid jealousy and lying, be persistent and helpful.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

PAI Materials in Elementary Schools include (1) Aqeedah: Belief in 6 pillars of faith, (2) Morals: Behaviour to Allah and His creatures, (3) Worship: Rules of mahdhoh worship and general worship, (4) Al Qur'an: Reading, writing, memorising and understanding verses of the Koran, (5) Tariikh Islam: History of the struggle of Islam. PAI learning model design with SEL approach:
Learning Model Design

The aim of the SEL model is holistic and characterised by developing the optimal physical, emotional, social, creative, spiritual and intellectual aspects of students, in addition to developing lifelong learners (Hursen, 2014). The learning strategy is undertaken in five ways. First, applying learning methods that involve active student participation to increase student motivation as all human dimensions are active by having concrete, meaningful, and relevant subject matter in the context of students’ lives (active student learning, contextual learning, inquiry-based learning, integrated learning) (Jiang et. al., 2020). Second, a conducive learning community (Horning et. al., 2020), where children can learn effectively in an atmosphere that provides a sense of security, appreciation, and encouragement. Third, it provides explicit, systematic, and continuous character education by involving aspects of recognising, loving and acting on the good. Fourth, teaching methods that pay attention to the uniqueness of each child by implementing a curriculum that involves nine aspects of human intelligence. All the above approaches apply the principles of developmentally appropriate practices (Saxby, et. al., 2020).

Learning Model for SEL Approach

All learning models included in constructivist theory (Cohen, Abreu Faro, & Tate, 2019) are suitable to be applied to learning with the SEL approach. These include (1) Small Group Discussion (SGD), (2) Role-Play & Simulation (RPS), (3) Case Study (CS), (4) Discovery Learning (DL), (5) Self-Directed Learning (SDL), (6) Cooperative Learning (CL), (7) Collaborative Learning (CbL), (8) Contextual Learning (CL), (9) Project Based Learning (PjBL), (10) Problem Based Learning (PBL), (11) Inquiry Learning (IL) (Pande & Bharathi, 2020).
All learning models are implemented through co-operative learning (Chan, 2020), which uses small groups so that students can work and learn from each other to achieve group goals. The advantages of co-operative learning strategies (Veldman, Doolaard, Bosker, & Snijders, 2020) include: students not being too dependent on the teacher, because they can increase their confidence through developing thinking ability, the ability to express ideas verbally, compare other people's ideas, find information from various sources and learn from other students. Second, students can practice responsibility, learn to communicate with others, practice in collaboration with others, respect time and others, be tolerant of differences of opinion. Third, students are able to practice solving abstract problems into reality and increase motivation which is useful for in the long-term.

**Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Approach**

In 1995, when Emotional Intelligence (Mérida-López, Bakker, & Extremera, 2019) was developed, the field of social-emotional learning SEL only just started and had a simple design. School-based SEL programs are very effective in being able to reduce various acts of student delinquency such as sex, drugs, crime and so on. The school's cultural climate must complement the SEL approach, while the lesson methodology must also be in accordance with the stages of student development (Aslan, 2011). Schools need to teach social-emotional skills to students including self-awareness, self-management, empathy, perspective and collaboration. Scientific data shows the effectiveness of the SEL program (Orson, McGovern, & Larson, 2020) as a form of intervention that can reduce the risk of a range of problems faced by young people and improve the ability to overcome life's challenges, a technique that has been proven to be successful for 17 years.

Some research results show that the SEL program paves the way for better academic achievement. Students become more confident and motivated. The SEL approach can increase student success in school as well as life. While many students feel anxious about examinations, the SEL approach motivated students to be more eager to strive for success on national standardised tests, and encourage confidence in striving to pass the national examination. Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a process that helps students develop knowledge, understanding, and skills that support learning, positive behaviour and constructive social relationships. SEL teaches students to recognise, organise and express the social and emotional aspects of student life, so that students can learn to live successfully in the world and be able to manage life's tasks.

The SEL program, which aims to develop core social-emotional competencies, consists of five elements. These include self-awareness (I. T. Park, Oh, & Lee, 2019) which identifies and recognises emotions, personal interest and self-strength, as well as maintaining self-confidence. Self-management (Hulbert & Goodwin, 2020) involves regulating emotions to
deal with stress, being able to control and motivate one’s self to overcome obstacles, regulate and monitor progress towards achieving personal and academic goals and being able to express emotions precisely. Social refers to (Kleckner et. al., 2018) empathising with others, respecting individuals and other groups and recognising similarities and differences. Relationship skills (Segrin & Taylor, 2007) incorporate building and maintaining healthy and beneficial relationships based on co-operation and resistance to inappropriate social pressure, preventing, managing and resolving interpersonal conflicts, and being able to seek help when needed. Responsible decision-making (Vo, et. al. 2019) indicates the ability to make decisions based on consideration of all relevant factors, with relevant ethical standards, safety issues and social norms, bearing the consequences of actions, evaluating and self-reflection.

SEL school implementation is undertaken by developing a program of student relations patterns with teachers, students and parents to teach skills, knowledge and understanding to students and being able to build social and emotional competence as well as selecting or developing programs that are appropriate for the school context. The SEL program has been compiled into a table of social-emotional learning programs containing: (1) year level; (2) sequential structure; (3) core competencies managed in social and emotional learning; (4) connected to essential learning; (5) proof of effectiveness; (6) basic theory; (7) student assessment; (8) professional development; and (9) parent programs.

The social-emotional learning model (SEL) is carried out holistically to foster emotional and social intelligence. Holistic learning takes place when the curriculum can display themes that encourage the occurrence of exploration or events authentically and naturally. A meaningful learning process will take place through the emergence of this natural theme or event, and the material designed will be interrelated with various fields of development in the curriculum. Holistic learning is based on an inquiry approach (Mamun, Lawrie, & Wright, 2020), where children are involved in planning, exploring and sharing ideas. They are encouraged to collaborate with friends and learn in their own “ways.” Children are empowered as learners and able to pursue their learning needs through designed themes.

Holistic social-emotional learning (SEL) can only be completed effectively if the learning is natural to the child's sense of self. Teachers who implement it must also have a well-integrated understanding of learning concepts. In addition, teacher creativity is necessary, the variety of teaching materials and the teacher's experience in practising thematic learning models will have a significant on determining the meaningfulness of learning (Sapto Adi, 2020). The goal of holistic and characterised social-emotional learning model (SEL) is to develop the optimal level of students’ physical, emotional, social, creative, spiritual and intellectual aspects. It also aims to form human beings who are lifelong learners.
Character Education

Character is a combination of attributes, patterns of attitudes and behaviours that are integrated to elevate one's identity and distinguish between each individual (Damon & Gregory, 2003). Character is a series of behavioural attitudes, motivations and skills which includes the desire to do one’s best (Marini, 2017). Students need character education that will form positive characters. Character building education has a higher meaning than moral education as it not only teaches what is right or wrong but also instills habits (habituation) about positive behaviour. It enables students to understand (cognitive domain) what is right or wrong, empathise (affective domain) with positive values and have the willingness to undertake an action (psychomotor domain).

National character can be viewed as cultural, the character of society, unity and the personality of community groups. Forming good character and a coherent personality can be undertaken through a civilising process. This process can be carried out by developing a person into a civilised human being, which is reflected in the value system adopted by the person and society.

The elements of carrying out character education in teaching include principles, processes and practices (Barton & Park, n.d.). In undertaking these principles, the appropriate values taught must be manifested in the curriculum so that all students understand them correctly and can translate them into real behaviour. However, limiting knowledge to moral values is not enough to build moral character. This includes character, moral (moral knowing), feelings about morals (moral feeling) and moral actions. It is necessary for humans to concurrently understand, feel, and work on the values of goodness.

There are six aims of moral teaching of moral knowing including (1) moral awareness; (2) knowing moral values; (3) taking perspective; (4) moral reasoning; (5) decision making; and (6) self-knowledge. There are six aspects of emotions that must be felt by an individual regarding moral feelings: (1) conscience, (2) self-esteem, (3) empathy, (4) loving goodness (5) self-control and (6) humanity. Moral action is the result (outcome) of two other components of character. Understanding what drives a person to do good (act morally) can be achieved by identifying three aspects of character: (1) competence, (2) will and (3) habits.

More specifically, there are four approaches in the field of character education (Kirschenbaum, 1995). A comprehensive approach to instilling character in children is grouped into four strategies: (1) incubation, (2) role models, (3) facilitation and (4) skill development to be able to adjust to life (life skills). Kirschenbaum also identified ten skills that need to be developed so that students can adapt and succeed in navigating their lives. These skills include (1) critical thinking, (2) creative thinking, (3) clear communication, (4) listening, (5) assertiveness.
(expressing opinions boldly), (6) rejecting peer pressure (to do bad things), (7) co-operative learning, (8) overcoming conflicts (disagreements), (9) academic skills and (10) social skills. All these skills are needed to create an intelligent and dignified life. There are seven ways to grow good character in children: (1) empathy, (2) conscience, (3) self-control, (4) respect, (5) kindness, (6) tolerance and (7) justice. Character intelligence is defined as a person's ability to understand right and wrong. Someone with a robust ethical conviction will act on that belief so that he or she becomes a moral and respectful person.

**Respectful Character**

Character is an internal psychological condition that drives a person to do something. These actions are carried out reflectively and are based on the awareness and will of the person undertaking it. Respectful character is a type of behaviour that contains the value of virtue and determining an action declared right or wrong based on Islamic norms. These norms are realised in the form of commands and prohibitions, encouragement-prevention, praise-criticism. Moral actions are ordered, encouraged, praised, and expected by Islam. Conversely, activities that are condemned and prohibited are categorised as despicable. Noble character characterises behaviour that follows Islamic norms or teachings both physically and mentally. Respectful morality refers to visible behaviour, while respectful character refers to the soul’s praiseworthy qualities. Thus, a respectful character is essentially a psychological condition (mental) and a commendable act based on Islamic norms. The behaviour is a natural reflection of the soul without any engineering. Respectful character consists of physical and spiritual aspects.

Moral aspects include good morals towards God, towards others and towards the environment. Good moral behaviour towards God is realised through *tawhid*, being thankful, pious, prayerful, *dzikr*, and faithful. Morals to others are mapped upon morals to parents, siblings, neighbors, and society in general. Moral behaviour towards the environment (nature) incorporates utilising, maintaining and preserving it. Human existence is obliged to serve God. Also, as part of the community, humans need to uphold the rules of social life, then look after themselves and their environment. Thus, human morals have aspects of divinity (*hablun minallah*) and humanity (*hablun minannas*).

The dimensions of noble morals are psychological conditions associated with learning in the affective domain. According to Amin (1974), affective dimensions include the will, conscience, feelings, values, attitudes and moral behaviour. Based on this description, moral dimensions incorporate willingness, conscience, values, attitudes and moral behaviour. In terms of actions, moral dimensions can be explained as follows: (1) willingness, namely the will (intention) of a person to do a praiseworthy act or avoid a despicable act. Undertaking an action is seen based on direction and intensity. (2) Conscience refers to the creation of human
beings who are *Hanif*, the tendency towards things that are true, good, and holy, feeling happy when doing good deeds, feeling guilty and having misgivings when committing bad acts. (3) Value is a person's belief that directs him or her to behave based on their beliefs. This includes intellectual (right-wrong) and ethical (good-bad) values. These values are believed to be based on Islamic teachings; (4) attitude (attitude), as conditions that contribute to actions and behaviour. Student response refers to the attitude of agreeing or disagreeing with a statement. The last, (5) consists of moral behaviour that is displayed in everyday life. It is assessed based on the standard content of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects in elementary schools.

**Conclusion**

Based on the above description, the social-emotional learning model (SEL) for PAI is carried out holistically to foster emotional and social intelligence. Holistic learning occurs when the PAI curriculum can display themes that drive exploration or events authentically and naturally. The emergence of natural themes or events will happen through a meaningful learning process and the material designed will be interrelated with various fields of development within the PAI curriculum. Holistic learning is based on an inquiry approach, where children are involved in planning, exploring and sharing ideas. Education that forms character has a higher meaning than moral education since it not only teaches what is right or wrong but also instills habits (habituation) about moral values. Hence, students understand (cognitive domain) about what is right and wrong, are able to feel (affective domain) good values, and willing to undertake action (psychomotor domain). The moral dimensions include willingness, conscience, values, attitudes and ethical behaviour.
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