



## The Role of Teachers in Developing Student Character in the Digital Age

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### ABSTRACT

In the rapidly evolving digital era, technology has profoundly transformed various aspects of human life, including education. The advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) have created new opportunities and complex challenges, especially in shaping the character of the younger generation. Teachers now play a pivotal role not only in imparting academic knowledge but also in guiding students to become responsible individuals with strong moral values, ready to face the increasingly complex global challenges. This article emphasizes the critical role of educators in fostering students' character development amidst digital advancements. It discusses the integration of digital ethics education, promotion of soft skills, appreciation of diversity, and media literacy. Through a descriptive analysis approach, the article draws on literature and primary sources to provide practical insights for educators in navigating the intersection of education, technology, and social change.

*Teacher, Student, Character, Digital Era*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital era, technology has changed almost all aspects of human life, including education. The development of information and communication technology opens up new opportunities but also presents complex challenges, especially in shaping the character of the younger generation. The role of teachers in developing students' character is no longer just about providing academic knowledge, but also about guiding them to become individuals who are responsible, have strong moral values, and are ready to face increasingly complex global challenges (Ngafifi, 2014).

Dramatic changes in the way we communicate, learn and work have been brought about by advances in digital technology. Today's generation is growing up in a much different environment than in the past, where access to information is almost unlimited and interactions with people from different parts of the world can happen in a matter of seconds. This creates new challenges for education, where teachers must not only teach

subjects, but also prepare students to become responsible and ethical leaders in this increasingly connected world (Fahrimal, 2018).

In addition, the role of technology in students' daily lives is increasingly dominant. From the use of social media to the consumption of digital content, students are exposed to various online information and interactions. Teachers must be able to utilize this technology as a tool to shape students' character, not as a substitute for moral values taught at home or at school.

The urgency of the teacher's role in developing students' character in the digital era is crucial as it is the foundation for building individuals who are competitive and have integrity. Strong character helps students not only succeed in their careers but also become good citizens in this increasingly complex and globalized society. With values such as integrity, empathy, and good communication skills, students can face challenges and opportunities in the digital world with confidence and a positive attitude (Pratama & Susilawati, 2023).

The importance of character development should not be ignored in the midst of all the technological sophistication. Teachers should play a more active role in providing an understanding of digital ethics, such as internet safety, data privacy, and the importance of responsible online behavior. By building this awareness early on, teachers help students understand that technology is a tool that should be used wisely and ethically (Sugiarto & Farid, 2023).

In the context of globalization and digitalization, students need to be equipped with soft skills that include cooperation, adaptability, and the ability to think critically. Teachers act as the main facilitator in developing these skills through active and collaborative learning approaches. By utilizing technology as a tool, teachers can create engaging and relevant learning experiences for students in the digital era.

In addition, diversity in the learning environment is also an important aspect that must be considered by teachers. The digital world presents students with various cultural backgrounds and values. Teachers have the opportunity to teach about diversity and build respect for differences, thus creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all students (Muhaimin et al., 2023).

This article is important because it illustrates the crucial role of teachers in developing students' character in the digital age, highlighting the need for moral values, soft skills and digital ethics as essential cornerstones in modern education. By offering practical guidance and encouraging discussion on the role of education in responding to technological and social change, this article not only provides deep insights but also stimulates critical thinking on how education can prepare future generations for complex and dynamic challenges.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method applied in this article is descriptive analysis based on literature review and primary sources related to Islamic education. The data used comes from reliable and relevant sources, such as classical and contemporary books, scientific journals, academic articles, and research results relevant to the topic discussed. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration and comprehensive analysis of key concepts in Islamic education, thus strengthening the theoretical foundation and conclusions drawn in this article (Sugiono, 2018).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Teachers in Educating Digital Ethics**

Education on digital ethics is crucial for teachers in preparing students to interact and use technology responsibly. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering subject matter, but also have an important role in guiding students in the wise and ethical use of the internet. This involves several aspects, such as online safety, appropriate behavior in digital communication, and respect for others' privacy.

Teachers need to provide students with a deep understanding of internet safety. This includes the importance of using strong passwords, avoiding openly sharing personal information, and understanding the risks associated with online interactions. According to Larry Magid, a digital safety expert, education about internet safety should start early and be continuously updated as new technologies develop (Magid, 2023). The role of teachers is to set an example in using technology wisely. They can integrate the use of technology in learning to show the right way to utilize digital resources. According to research by Sheryl Burgstahler, a professor at the University of Washington, purposeful use of technology supported by teachers can improve students' understanding of digital ethics (Burgstahler, 2022).

In addition, teachers also have a responsibility to teach about ethics in digital communication. This includes the importance of respecting the opinions of others, avoiding the spread of fake news or unverified information, and building a positive internet culture. Research by Sonia Livingstone, a media expert at the London School of Economics, emphasizes that teachers can play a role in shaping students' online behavior through open discussions and positive behavioral models (Livingstone, 2021).

A teacher also needs to focus on the issue of cyberbullying and the importance of building a safe and inclusive online environment. By providing mentoring and supporting students who experience or witness cyberbullying, teachers can help reduce these incidents. According to Jessica Pater, a researcher at Stanford University, efforts to reduce cyberbullying should involve collaboration between teachers, parents and the school community to create effective policies and sustainable prevention approaches (Dewi et al., 2023).

Overall, education about digital etiquette is a shared responsibility between teachers, parents and society. Teachers serve as the main agents in shaping students' online behavior, setting examples, and providing a deep understanding of safety and ethics in internet use. By engaging students in open discussions and supporting an inclusive learning environment, teachers can help create a generation of smart, responsible and caring young people with digital ethics in this evolving digital age.

### **Teachers in Facilitating Soft Skills**

Soft skills, such as leadership, cooperation, empathy and communication, are increasingly recognized as important aspects of personal and professional success in the fast-changing digital age. Teachers have a central role in facilitating the development of these skills in students. In addition to delivering academic material, teachers are responsible for creating a learning environment that supports the development of these soft skills.

Teachers act as facilitators in teaching leadership skills. Guiding students to identify their own leadership potential, develop self-confidence and understand the principles of effective leadership is an important part of character education. By assigning responsibilities in group projects or extracurricular activities, teachers can help students practice their leadership skills in a real context.

Cooperation is an indispensable skill in today's world of work and social life. Teachers can develop students' cooperation skills through collaborative projects that require students to work together, respect different opinions, and achieve common goals. According to research by Daniel Goleman, a psychologist famous for the concept of emotional intelligence, cooperation is one of the keys to effective team success (Rosita & Leonard, 2015).

Furthermore, empathy is a skill that enables students to understand and respond well to the feelings of others. Teachers can teach empathy through discussions about other people's perspectives, role plays, or case studies that allow students to see from different points of view. Research has shown that empathy skills not only improve the quality of interpersonal relationships, but also help in resolving conflicts more effectively (Davis, 2023).

Effective communication is also a key skill in the digital age dominated by online interactions and social media. Teachers can facilitate the development of students' communication skills through role-modeling, public speaking exercises, and projects that require students to convey their ideas clearly and persuasively. By leveraging technology, teachers can use digital platforms to train students in written and oral communication and utilize creative tools such as podcasts or video presentations.

In addition, teachers also need to pay attention to developing adaptability and problem resolution skills. In the rapidly changing digital age, the ability to adapt to change and find creative solutions to problems is an invaluable skill. Through teaching

that emphasizes experimentation and problem solving, teachers can help students develop these abilities effectively.

A holistic approach to soft skills development requires teachers to not only focus on individual aspects, but also consider how these skills contribute to students' success in life as a whole. According to the views of George Siemens, an educator famous for his theory of connected learning, learning soft skills should be done in a relevant context and take into account the complex interactions between individuals, technology and society (Pare & Sihotang, 2023).

Thus, the role of teachers in developing soft skills in students is not only important for their academic preparation, but also to shape individuals who can adapt, communicate well and cooperate effectively in this increasingly connected digital society. Through an integrated and innovative approach, teachers can make a significant contribution in shaping a young generation that is ready to face future global challenges.

### **Teachers in Building Diversity and Tolerance**

In this increasingly connected and globalized digital era, the diversity of cultures, values and backgrounds is becoming increasingly apparent. Teachers have a central role in building understanding, appreciation and tolerance of this diversity among students. Through inclusive and respectful learning approaches, teachers can help students build the ability to interact with people from different backgrounds, both in virtual and real-world environments.

The role of teachers in building an understanding of diversity is to introduce students to different cultures, traditions and values. Through teaching about the history, art and literature of different cultures, teachers open students' eyes to the richness and complexity of this diverse world. Research shows that inclusive multicultural education can increase understanding and reduce stereotypes between groups (Huda, 2021).

In building tolerance, teachers must be good models in appreciating and respecting differences. By promoting an open attitude and open dialogue, teachers help create a safe learning environment for all students, regardless of their background. The importance of role-modeling in shaping attitudes of tolerance should not be overlooked, as students often learn from the examples set by their teachers.

Learning about diversity should also include teaching about the importance of social inclusion and respect for human rights. Teachers can teach students to identify and overcome discrimination and promote equality among individuals from all backgrounds. According to research by Gloria Ladson-Billings, an education expert at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, education that values diversity can improve students' academic performance and overall well-being (Maulindah et al., 2023).

Technology can be a powerful tool in supporting learning about diversity. Teachers can utilize digital platforms to deliver learning experiences that broaden students' horizons about different cultures and life experiences. Through collaborative projects involving students from different backgrounds, teachers can create opportunities for students to learn from each other and experience the values of different cultures first-hand.

Last but not least, building diversity and tolerance is not only relevant in an educational context, but also in an increasingly globalized society. Teachers have a responsibility to teach students how to work together with individuals from different backgrounds in increasingly diverse work environments and communities. By providing deep and reflective learning experiences, teachers can prepare students to become open-minded global citizens who can contribute positively in a multicultural society.

In this regard, the role of teachers in building diversity and tolerance is crucial in this connected digital age. Through inclusive educational approaches, respect for differences, and the application of universal values such as human rights, teachers can help shape a younger generation that respects diversity, values universal values, and is ready to participate in this increasingly connected and complex world.

### **Teachers in Teaching Media Literacy**

In today's world where information is easily accessible through the internet, the ability to understand, evaluate, and use information critically is a very important skill for students. Teachers have a crucial role in teaching media literacy to students, so that they can become intelligent and critical consumers of information in this complex digital world.

The role of teachers in teaching media literacy is to teach students about how to identify reliable sources of information. It involves education on the characteristics of reliable sources, such as academic publications, official websites, and verified journalism. Teachers need to equip students with the skills to critically evaluate the information they encounter online, distinguish between facts and opinions, and identify possible biases that exist in a content (Handiyani & Yunus Abidin, 2023).

Teachers also have the responsibility of guiding students in understanding the different types of biases that may exist in digital media. This includes political bias, racial bias, gender bias, and more. By providing relevant examples and case studies, teachers help students understand how bias can affect the perception and interpretation of information. According to research by Renee Hobbs, a professor at the University of Rhode Island, effective media literacy involves the ability to recognize and overcome biases that exist in the media (Hobbs, 2023).

Furthermore, teachers also have the responsibility to teach students about the importance of information verification. In a digital world full of unverified information,

teachers can teach techniques for verifying the truth of information, including checking sources, comparing with other sources, and confirming with experts if necessary. This not only helps students avoid spreading misinformation, but also shapes them into individuals who are healthily skeptical of the information they encounter online.

In addition, the role of teachers in teaching media literacy also involves the application of a critical approach to the content consumed by students. Teachers can teach techniques for criticizing and analyzing different types of content, such as news articles, videos, memes, and podcasts. By providing case studies and discussions, teachers help students develop the ability to read between lines, find hidden motives, and evaluate the validity and relevance of information.

Teachers can use technology as a tool to teach media literacy. Digital platforms and apps can be used for simulations, interactive exercises, and learning experiences that allow students to develop their skills in digital information management. By utilizing technology, teachers can create relevant and engaging learning experiences for students in this digital era.

Teachers should also encourage students to become responsible and ethical content producers in digital media. By promoting practices such as creating original content, respecting copyright, and respecting the privacy of others, teachers help students understand the impact of the content they create and how they can contribute positively in the digital space.

Overall, the role of teachers in teaching media literacy is crucial in preparing students to become intelligent consumers and producers of information in the digital era that is full of complexity. With a holistic and sustainable approach, teachers can help students develop critical skills and independence in seeking, evaluating, and using information appropriately and effectively in a variety of contexts.

### **Teachers in Building Moral and Ethical Character**

Teachers have a central role in this process, as they not only teach academic subjects, but also serve as role models and moral guides for students. The role of teachers in building moral character is to provide learning centered on ethical values. Through teaching about honesty, integrity, empathy, and responsibility, teachers help students understand and internalize moral principles that are important in everyday life. Research shows that systematically integrated character education can improve student behavior and create a more positive school environment.

Teachers play a good role model in demonstrating moral principles in daily actions. By being a consistent role model in behavior that is in accordance with the values taught, teachers not only teach with words but also with actions. According to Michael Fullan, an education expert, teachers' moral leadership can affect not only students' academic achievement but also their character development (Arsini et al., 2023).

Then also an educator has the responsibility to facilitate student discussion and reflection on relevant moral issues in society. By providing space to talk about moral dilemmas, ethical controversies, and challenges to complex values, teachers help students develop critical thinking and the ability to make informed decisions based on the values they embrace. Discussions like this also prepare students to deal with various moral situations they may encounter in the real world.

In this complex digital era, teachers also need to teach about digital ethics. This includes understanding responsible internet use, respecting the privacy of others, and avoiding unethical online behavior such as cyberbullying or the spread of false information. According to UNESCO, digital literacy and digital ethics should be an integral part of the educational curriculum to help students develop safe and ethical online behavior (UNESCO, 2021).

Teachers can also use technology as a tool to teach moral values. By utilizing digital platforms and apps, teachers can provide educational content designed to promote reflection and discussion on moral issues. Technology also allows teachers to create interactive and engaging learning experiences, so that students can be more engaged in the learning process about moral and ethical character.

The importance of building moral and ethical character is not only relevant in the context of education, but also in shaping a better society. Teachers have a unique opportunity to shape the future through learning that emphasizes the importance of integrity, honesty, and empathy. By preparing students to act in accordance with moral values in all aspects of their lives, teachers help create a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also morally responsible in acting and interacting with others.

Overall, the role of teachers in building moral and ethical character is very important in this digital era. With a holistic and sustainable approach, teachers can make a significant contribution to shaping individuals who have strong values, are able to think critically, and are prepared to face moral challenges in an increasingly complex and digitally connected society.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article has outlined the important role of teachers in developing students' character in the digital era. Teachers are not only responsible for educating digital ethics, facilitating soft skills, building diversity and tolerance, teaching media literacy, and building moral and ethical character, but also being the main pillar in shaping individuals who are ready to face the complex challenges of today's global society. Through a holistic and values-oriented approach, teachers play a crucial role in equipping students with the skills and understanding necessary to succeed in their personal, academic, and professional lives.



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