



Strategies for Understanding Vocational High School Learners Through Identification of Self Characteristic

Achmad Romadin¹, Vika Puji Cahyani^{2*}, Fahri Anwar³, Erniyani Erniyani⁴,
Muhammad Taufiq Arfah⁵

^{1,3,4,5}Mechanical Of Education, Faculty Of Engineering, Universitas Negeri
Makassar

²Chemistry Education, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Makassar
State University

Corresponding Author: Vika Puji Cahyani vika.puji.cahyani@unm.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the characteristics of learners in vocational education is an important element in creating an effective learning environment that supports vocational development. This article uses the literature review method to analyse the factors that influence learner characteristics and the pedagogical approaches that can be applied. Characteristics such as social background, interest in vocational fields, and intrinsic motivation have a significant influence on learning outcomes. By identifying learners' individual characteristics, educators can apply customised learning strategies, such as project-based and simulation methods, to improve students' engagement and work readiness. This study aims to provide practical insights for educators in developing learning strategies that support learners' academic achievement and character development

INTRODUCTION

Education is not just a process of knowledge transfer, but also an effort to shape the character and personality of learners to be able to play a role in society positively and effectively. In this context, understanding learners' characters is crucial. An understanding of character not only allows educators to customise their teaching approach, but also helps in identifying the unique needs of each learner (Suyadi, 2019). According to research conducted by Kurniawati (2020), learner character encompasses broad aspects of personality such as emotional, cognitive and social traits that influence how they learn and interact in the educational environment.

The role of educators in understanding learners' characters includes recognising individual differences in the classroom. A study by Santoso (2021) revealed that a deep understanding of students' unique characters can improve their learning outcomes and active participation in class. This adjustment, known as a differentiated learning approach, allows learners to receive material according to their personal learning styles and capacities. Good character understanding also makes it easier for teachers to adapt learning methods that are more inclusive and based on developmental psychology.

In addition, understanding learners' characters is also closely related to creating a supportive and adaptive learning environment. According to recent research from Rahmawati (2022), a conducive classroom atmosphere allows students to be more open and engaged in the learning process. Rahmawati (2022) emphasising the importance of teachers creating an environment that understands the psychological aspects of character development, such as how to deal with introverted and extroverted learners so that they are able to develop optimally in social and academic settings.

Characteristics such as self-confidence, co-operation skills, and the courage to express oneself are strongly influenced by the approach given by teachers in the classroom. This is supported by studies Pratama (2019) showing that when teachers pay attention to students' individual characteristics, they tend to have better academic and social performance. Learning that is inclusive and based on understanding the character of learners is considered capable of producing graduates who are not only cognitively intelligent, but also have good emotional and social skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overall, understanding the character of learners should be a major concern in Indonesia's education system. Without this understanding, efforts to create a comprehensive and character-orientated education will be difficult to achieve. Therefore, current studies on understanding learners' character need to be developed as a basis for future education policies (Mulyani, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a literature review method approach to collect and analyse relevant data on learner character. This method involves searching, selecting and evaluating various literature sources, such as journal articles, books and research reports that have been published in recent years. The literature

collected relates to factors that influence learners' character development as well as pedagogical approaches that support the understanding of learners' character. In the process, the literature was identified based on certain criteria, such as relevant topics, range of recent publications, and reputation of the sources, to ensure the accuracy and feasibility of the data.



Figure 1. Flow of Literature Study Implementation

After the literature data was collected, the next step was a thematic analysis of the findings using the grounded theory method. This analysis aims to identify key concepts that can guide a deeper understanding of learners' characters, such as environmental influences and differential learning methods. The process involves arranging the findings sorted by theme, which is then analysed to find consistent patterns. The results of this analysis are expected to provide theoretical and practical insights into approaches that can be applied by educators in understanding and developing learners' character in the school environment.

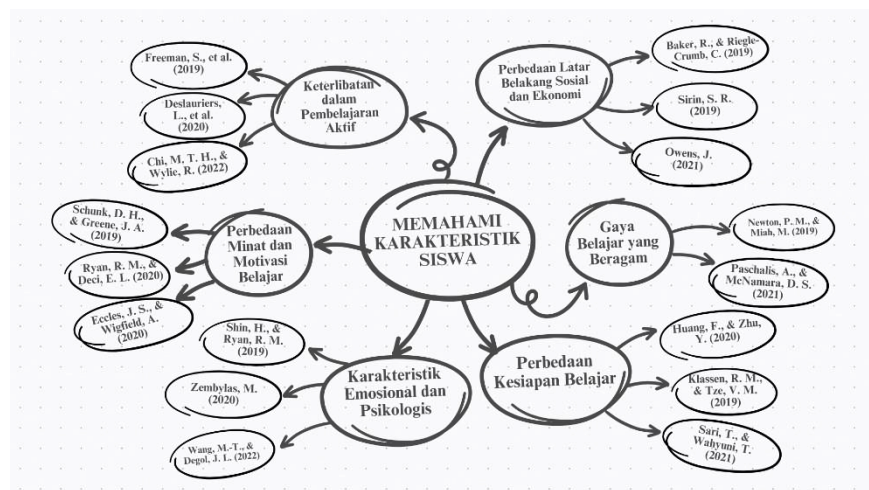


Figure 2. Grounded Theory in Student Characteristics

Education is one of the strategic ways to shape learners' character. Through structured education, various moral and ethical values can be incorporated into the curriculum and daily learning activities. It aims to develop not only cognitive aspects, but also character that includes values such as responsibility, honesty, discipline and social care.

According to Supriyanto (2021), 'character education aims to instil moral values that will shape the personalities of learners who are superior and able to face social challenges in everyday life'. Character education becomes an essential

part because learners are not only prepared intellectually but also must be able to adapt in society with good attitudes and behaviour.

The character education approach can be done through various learning methods, for example an experiential approach that allows learners to directly engage in activities that encourage character development. In his research, Harahap (2019) mentioned that 'experiential education can be more effective in shaping character, because students feel and practice the values taught directly'.

Furthermore, studies conducted by Prasetyo (2020) show that character education programmes integrated in each subject have a positive impact on the formation of students' social attitudes, such as cooperation, empathy and mutual respect. The implementation of character values in various subjects and school activities helps students to internalise these values in their daily lives. Thus, education not only acts as a means of conveying knowledge but also as a medium to shape the character of students. Through consistent efforts, education can produce young people who are not only academically smart but also have good character and are ready to face global challenges.

Education demands not only technical skills but also social skills, especially communication skills. According to a study by Rahayu (2023), good communication skills are an important indicator of success in the world of work for vocational graduates, especially in fields that require collaboration.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Educators in Understanding Learners' Characters

Teachers in vocational education act not only as facilitators, but also as mentors who understand each student deeply. The role of teachers in facilitating characteristic-based learning is very significant for the success of vocational learning (T., R. M., & S. K. Marlina, 2022). The application of methods such as project-based practice and simulation is considered effective in adjusting to the vocational characteristics of learners. Recent studies by Andrianto (2023) show that the use of project-based methods supports more meaningful learning for students with a practical orientation. Understanding learners' characteristics not only helps in teaching, but also in preparing them for the industrial world. This is highlighted by Wahyudi (2022) in the study, where results show that adaptation of teaching methods by considering vocational characteristics improves students' work readiness.

A holistic approach that includes psychological, social, and academic aspects is essential to understanding students thoroughly. Marlina (2023) argues that understanding students holistically can help teachers provide appropriate guidance, especially for students with special needs. This approach allows teachers to provide more comprehensive support. This approach is particularly relevant in vocational education, given the diversity of students' backgrounds as well as variations in their learning readiness (Marlina, 2023). Providing programmes that include the development of soft skills, such as cooperation and communication, allows students to develop in broader aspects than just technical skills. In this regard, the holistic approach also recognises that students have unique potential that needs to be developed in an integrated manner to meet educational and career needs.

Understanding Learner Characteristics

Studies show that understanding learner characteristics in vocational education is an important step in creating a learning environment that meets vocational needs. According to Hidayat (2021), characteristic factors such as socioeconomic background, interest in the vocational field and intrinsic motivation influence the effectiveness of vocational learning. Learners in vocational education often demonstrate a need for collaborative skills development, which is crucial in industry. Research by Miller (2019) found that project-based learning environments improve learners' communication and co-operation skills.

Indicators used to understand vocational students include career interests, basic technical skills, and the ability to work in teams. A study by Prasetyo (2022) found that students who are highly motivated in a particular technical field tend to perform better academically. Vocational learners tend to have a special interest in practical skills or specific vocational areas. According to research, intrinsic motivation and interest in practical skills affect their academic achievement and readiness to enter the workforce (Smith, 2021).

Teachers are expected to recognise variations in individual characteristics and adjust their learning methods accordingly. Research by Suryani (2023) indicates that teaching differentiation strategies based on student characteristics can increase student engagement. In vocational education, independence and responsibility are important characteristics. Zhao (2022) stating that independent and responsible learners are better prepared for workplace challenges and more motivated to develop their skills. Much of the literature mentions that vocational education learners often have varying readiness to learn, influenced by socio-economic background and exposure to previous practical experience (Anderson, 2020). Learners who have practical experience are more adaptable to vocational training materials.

Indicators of learner characteristics are instrumental in the effectiveness of vocational learning strategies. By understanding learner characteristics, educators can design more suitable approaches, such as practice-based learning and collaborative projects, which are proven to increase learners' interest, skills and readiness. For example, implementing collaborative learning models in the classroom can help develop learners' social skills, while practice-based approaches support the enhancement of learners' intrinsic motivation. In addition, the development of learning readiness through industry-relevant tasks enables learners to be better prepared for work demands.

Learner Characteristics

The school environment, including interactions with peers and teaching staff, shapes the characteristics of students in vocational education. According to research conducted by Sutrisno (2021), a supportive environment increases students' confidence in facing practical learning challenges. A good school environment can increase students' intrinsic motivation, which is one of the important indicators in the success of vocational education. The school environment covering physical, social and psychological aspects plays an important role in supporting the development of learners' characteristics in

vocational education. A positive environment, such as adequate learning facilities, harmonious relationships between learners, and support from teaching staff, is known to strengthen students' engagement in learning activities. According to research by Nurhidayah (2023), students who feel supported and have adequate facilities at school are more motivated to participate in learning with enthusiasm. In addition, an inclusive environment can reduce feelings of isolation for students who may have special needs or limitations, increasing their self-confidence.

Psychological aspects such as self-confidence, resilience and anxiety also affect the learning process in vocational education. Research from Wijaya (2022) found that students with low levels of anxiety performed better in technical practice than students with high anxiety. Psychological aspects such as self-confidence and the ability to manage emotions are highly influential on students' ability to deal with the pressures that may arise in the often challenging vocational learning process. For example, research conducted by Fauziah (2023) shows that students with good emotional resilience are better able to deal with challenges in technical and practical tasks. Students who are able to manage stress are more likely to have consistent focus and motivation in completing tasks, compared to students who experience difficulties in emotional regulation. According to this journal, approaches such as providing stress management training in vocational schools can help students develop emotion management skills.

Strategies for Understanding Learner Characteristics at the Vocational High School Level

Understanding learners at the SMK level requires a different approach compared to other levels of education. This is due to the needs of SMK students who are oriented towards practical skills as well as the development of work character. The strategy of understanding learners can be done through characteristic indicators, which include psychological, social, and academic aspects. Educators can use evaluation tools to identify students' learning profiles, including learning styles (visual, auditory or kinesthetic). This data helps teachers design more relevant teaching methods. For example, students with kinesthetic learning styles learn more effectively through hands-on practice than theory. Learner learning profiles are the basis for developing effective and inclusive learning strategies (Romadin et al., 2022)

Each learner has a unique background and needs. Strategies for understanding SMK students include individual guidance to recognise their potential, interests and constraints. By understanding the challenges students face, educators can provide specific solutions and support their success. According to (Idkhan et al., 2024) individual guidance provides space for students to explore their potential in a conducive atmosphere.

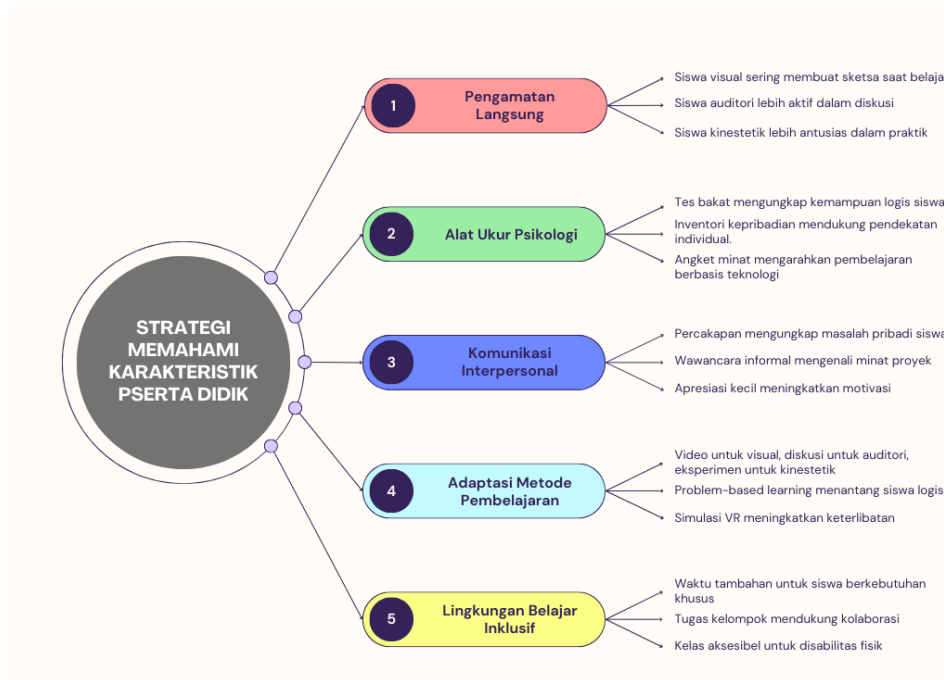


Figure 3. Strategies for Understanding Vocational High School Learners

This concept drawing is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of strategies for understanding learner characteristics, particularly in the context of Vocational High Schools (SMK). In the world of vocational education, understanding learners is key in creating learning that is relevant, effective and able to prepare students for the challenges of the world of work. Through this figure, each element of the strategy is shown visually to facilitate understanding.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

Education is the main foundation in shaping the character of learners with integrity, discipline, and responsibility. In this process, the role of educators becomes very important, not only as teachers but also as mentors who understand the unique character of each individual. Through a deep understanding of learners' characteristics, educators can develop learning strategies that are not only academically effective but also support the development of strong character.

Character education aims to instil moral, social and emotional values that help learners develop into individuals who are able to adapt and contribute positively in society. This character building through education covers various aspects, such as honesty, empathy, hard work, and a sense of responsibility. Therefore, education plays an important role in shaping future generations who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have noble character and attitudes that are in accordance with positive social norms.

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