



The Strategic Role of Schools as Formal Educational Institutions in Fostering Character and Social Development

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Abstract

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Schools as formal educational institutions hold a central role in shaping competitive individuals and societies in the global era. The function of schools extends beyond the mere transfer of knowledge; they serve as centers for character formation, cultural value internalization, and the development of social and moral competencies among students. Furthermore, schools contribute to social and economic development by enhancing the quality of human resources who are productive and adaptable to changing times. This study employs a library research method to analyze the function of schools within the framework of formal education and their contribution to societal development. The findings are reveal that schools function as agents of value conservation, social innovation, and mediation between individuals and society. Thus, schools act as strategic instruments in realizing a knowledgeable, cultured, and morally upright society. Enhancing the quality of formal education is therefore the key to achieving equitable and sustainable national progress.



1. Introduction

The school, as a formal educational institution, holds a fundamental position in the process of human and societal development. In the context of modern education, the role of the school is not limited to providing knowledge alone, but also encompasses the formation of character, morals, and the internalization of human values in students (Arif, 2022). Through a systematic and planned learning process, schools carry out three main functions: conservative, progressive, and mediation, which dynamically interact to create individuals who are knowledgeable, strong in character, and adaptive to the changes of time. Formal education plays an important role in preparing students to possess critical thinking skills, life skills, and high social awareness, enabling them to make a real contribution to the nation's progress (Chusni et al., 2020). The function of reproduction in educational institutions emphasizes the importance of knowledge renewal and the mastery of technology, in order to prepare competitive graduates amidst global challenges.

Meanwhile, the function of awareness plays a role in maintaining moral, cultural, and spiritual values that constitute the nation's identity amidst the rapid current of modernization, which often erodes local identity. On the other hand, the school also serves as a means of socialization that educates students to live in harmony, respect differences, and develop the ability to cooperate in a pluralistic social context (Saihu et al., 2022). Through social interaction in the school environment, students learn to build empathy, solidarity, and social responsibility. In this context, the school becomes an important medium for social integration in shaping social cohesion and stability. If this social function is carried out effectively,

the school will not only produce intellectually smart individuals but also ethical, caring citizens who have moral responsibility towards their environment and surrounding community (Begum et al., 2022).

National education policy, as stated in Law Number 20 Tahun 2003 concerning the National Education System (*Sistem Pendidikan Nasional /Sisdiknas*), as well as the implementation of School-Based Management (*Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah/MBS*), emphasizes the importance of community participation in the provision of education (Hardi & Dwimawanti, 2019). Through the involvement of the community in the form of school committees and education councils, a constructive collaboration is established between the school, parents, and the community to improve the quality and relevance of educational services. This approach reflects a new paradigm of education that is inclusive, participatory, and oriented towards improving the quality of human resources. However, the realization of the school's ideal function is faced with various complex challenges. The low quality of teachers, limited facilities and infrastructure, the digital divide, and the prevalence of bullying are inhibiting factors for the creation of a conducive and quality learning environment (Madida et al., 2019).

In addition, the mismatch between the curriculum and the needs of the working world creates a gap between educational outcomes and the socio-economic conditions of society, necessitating continuous reform so that education remains relevant and responsive to global developments. In the context of community development, the school has a strategic function as an agent of social change. Through the transmission of cultural values, the cultivation of collective awareness,

and the strengthening of citizen participation, the school plays a role in strengthening social capital and building a society that is adaptive to global transformation (Carmen et al., 2022). Therefore, the school does not only act as an academic institution but also as a social space that shapes empowered, cultured human beings who contribute to shared progress. By carrying out conservative, innovative, and mediating functions in a balanced manner, the school becomes a strategic instrument in producing a generation that is knowledgeable, moral, and productive, while strengthening the foundation of sustainable national development.

2. Methods

This study employs the library research method, aiming to analyze the function of the school as a formal educational institution in the context of modern community development. This approach focuses on the exploration and analysis of relevant scientific literature to gain a deep understanding of the school's strategic role in shaping human resources and the social dynamics of society. Library research was chosen because it can provide a comprehensive conceptual overview of educational phenomena that are theoretical and normative in nature. The data in this research are sourced from various scientific publications, including academic books, national and international journal articles, as well as previous research findings published within the last five years.

Data sources were collected through credible academic databases, such as Google Scholar, Research Gate and other indexed journal repositories. The research procedure was carried out through several systematic stages: (1) identification of key

issues and variables related to the function of the school as a social institution and formal education; (2) collection of secondary data through the selection of relevant and quality literature; (3) content analysis and thematic synthesis of the study results; and (4) drawing conceptual conclusions based on dominant and mutually reinforcing literature findings. Data analysis was performed using a content analysis technique that focuses on an in-depth review of the literature content to find themes, concepts, and patterns of argumentation relevant to the research focus. This approach helps the researcher understand how the school's function is explained from the perspectives of modern education, sociology of education, and community development theory. Through this process, the research seeks to identify the school's contribution to character building, improving the quality of human resources, and its social role in sustainable development.

The library research method is considered appropriate because it not only highlights the empirical aspects but also provides a conceptual understanding of the relationship between education and society. By exploring various existing research results and theories, this study is expected to enrich the academic discourse on the role of formal education as a main pillar in social development. Furthermore, the research results are expected to become a conceptual basis for the formulation of educational policies that are more responsive to social change and the increasingly complex needs of the global community.

3. Results

The school has a central role in shaping individuals to be able to adapt to social change and the developments of the era. As a formal educational institution, the school functions not only to transfer knowledge but also to instill moral, social, and cultural values that form the foundation of community life. Through the learning process, students are trained to interact, cooperate, and appreciate diversity. Arif (2022) explains that the school acts as a means of character formation, enabling students to learn to obey rules, be disciplined, and be responsible. Through intense social interaction in the school environment, students internalize social values that become the main provision for life in society.

Apart from being a space for socialization, the school also functions as an agent of social transformation that has great potential in determining the direction of community change. Formal education plays a role in developing students' critical, innovative, and creative thinking abilities. Chusni et al. (2020) state that the school functions as an instrument of social development that prepares the young generation to contribute to creating a more just and advanced society. Thus, education not only produces skilled labor but also individuals who have social awareness and the ability to solve problems constructively. The school's role in social development is increasingly important when linked to the context of globalization and the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The increasingly competitive job market demands that formal education graduates possess superior competence and the ability to adapt to technological advances.

Carmen et al. (2022) assert that educational institutions have a strategic role in increasing human capacity through learning oriented towards social and economic empowerment. Schools are expected to produce graduates who are not only academically intelligent but also possess strong character, leadership spirit, and empathy for the surrounding social conditions. In the context of national development, formal education has a close relationship with economic growth. Quality education is a driving factor for labor productivity and the acceleration of economic development. Tyas et al., (2020) found that an increase in the quality of education is directly proportional to the increase in the competitiveness of human resources, because education plays a role in instilling the values of hard work, responsibility, and independence. Therefore, the school is not only understood as a learning institution but also as a long-term investment for human development and the nation's economic progress.

In addition, the school functions as a container for the reproduction of knowledge and culture. The educational process enables the inheritance of values, norms, and traditions from one generation to the next. However, in the modern era, this function is no longer static. The school also becomes a space for cultural innovation, where old values are adjusted to remain relevant to contemporary demands (Hardi & Dwimawanti, 2019). Teachers play an important role in this process because they are the bridge between traditional knowledge and modern science. Through reflective and creative learning, students understand that culture is dynamic, open to change, and continues to evolve with the times. The school also plays an important role in strengthening national identity.

Anisah (2019) affirms that moral and value education in schools is part of an effort to strengthen the nation's character amidst the strong current of globalization. Through teaching and learning processes, ceremonial activities, and social interaction, the school instills national values such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, and love for the homeland. These values become important social capital in maintaining unity amid the diversity of Indonesian society. Thus, the school's function develops from being merely a place of learning to an arena for the formation of national identity and social solidarity. The digitalization of education presents both opportunities and challenges for schools in carrying out their functions.

Ghosh (2021) reveals that the digitalization of learning expands access to knowledge, increases the efficiency of the learning process, and improves the quality of educational outcomes. Schools that are able to optimize information technology can create an interactive, collaborative, and contextual learning atmosphere. However, digitalization also creates a gap for schools that do not yet have adequate facilities. Limited internet access, digital devices, and technological literacy skills are major inhibiting factors in the equitable distribution of education quality. This digital gap has an impact on the increasing inequality of learning opportunities between urban and rural schools. Madida et al. (2019) emphasizes that the digital divide in education causes differences in students' ability to access modern learning resources. This condition demands that the government strengthen education equity policies through the provision of infrastructure and training for educators.

In addition, the integration of digital literacy into the curriculum is important so that students can use technology productively and ethically. Thus, schools can play an active role in forming a smart, ethical, and competitive digital society. The function of the school is also closely related to community welfare. Through formal education, the community gains the opportunity to improve its standard of living. Education opens new economic opportunities, reduces poverty, and encourages social mobility. Laksono (2018) explain that educational institutions have a significant role in social empowerment because education increases an individual's ability to access better employment. In this context, the school functions as an agent of socio-economic development capable of encouraging society to become more inclusive and productive. Nevertheless, the implementation of the school's function is not free from a number of challenges. The uneven quality of teachers, limited infrastructure, and frequently changing educational policies are impediments to improving education quality.

Ainur and Mohamad (2022) asserts that improving teacher competence is a key factor in educational success. Teachers not only act as instructors but also as mentors and role models for students. Therefore, continuous professional development programs are needed so that teachers can adapt to advances in science and technology. School-Based Management (MBS) is also an important strategy in strengthening the school's role. Hardiansyah (2022) states that the implementation of MBS encourages active community participation in the management of education. Through MBS, schools gain autonomy in decision-making, program planning, and resource management. Community involvement through the school committee also

increases transparency and accountability in the provision of education. Thus, MBS becomes an effective instrument in creating an education system that is adaptive to local and global needs.

In addition to facing internal challenges, schools must also deal with the influence of global culture which has the potential to shift students' moral values. Anisah (2019) highlights that the penetration of digital media influences the mindset and behavior of adolescents. Individualistic and hedonistic values present in global culture need to be balanced with strong character education. Schools must become a moral fortress that instills the values of integrity, empathy, and social responsibility so that students do not lose their identity amid the strong current of globalization. The school is a multifunctional institution that plays a strategic role in community development. Through formal education, human beings are shaped not only as intellectual individuals but also as social and moral beings. Mursitama et al. (2022) emphasize that the role of the school cannot be replaced by other institutions, because formal education has a structure, evaluation system, and legitimacy that guarantees the continuity of values across generations.

In the context of national development, the school is the main pillar that supports social, cultural, and economic progress. To strengthen this role, policies that favor improving the quality of education are needed (Irmayani et al., 2018). The government needs to focus on equitable access, increasing teacher professionalism, and the curriculum's relevance to the needs of the community and the workforce. Furthermore, collaboration between the government, the community, and the industrial sector must be strengthened so that education can produce competent

graduates who are adaptive to the demands of the 21st century. Thus, the school can function optimally as an institution that prepares a generation with strong character, competence, and high competitiveness amid the continuously developing global dynamics.

4. Conclusion

The school, as a formal educational institution, plays a strategic role in shaping the character, knowledge, and skills of the younger generation who are ready to face global challenges. Through a systematic learning process, the school functions not only as a place for knowledge transfer but also as a container for the formation of moral, social, and cultural values that form the basis of community life. The school contributes to the holistic development of human beings, improves the quality of human resources, and strengthens a just social order.

With the existence of national education policies and the implementation of school-based management, community participation is increasingly optimized in the supervision and development of education quality. Nevertheless, challenges such as access inequality, facility limitations, and teacher quality need to be continuously addressed. Therefore, improving the quality of schools and the synergy between the government, educators, and the community is the main key to realizing inclusive, relevant, and competitive education, in order to produce a successor generation with integrity and active contribution to national development.

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