



Classroom management strategies in building student character at a superior elementary school based on the wetland ecoregion in North Banjarmasin District

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Abstract

Ineffective classroom management can hinder efforts to develop students' character, particularly in high-performing public elementary schools (SDN Unggul) located in wetland areas such as North Banjarmasin District. The unique environmental characteristics of these regions require more adaptive and context-based classroom management strategies. This community service activity aimed to enhance teachers' capacity through training on classroom management strategies that support character development. The methods employed included participatory training through material delivery, group discussions, case studies, and hands-on classroom practice. The results showed a significant improvement in teachers' competencies. The average score for classroom management understanding increased from 65.2 to 85.6 (+20.4), the ability to implement character-building strategies rose from 58.4 to 82.8 (+24.4), and proactive attitudes toward innovation improved from 60.1 to 87.2 (+27.1). The impact on students was also clearly measurable. Character observations indicated improvements in discipline from 68% to 85% (+17), responsibility from 62% to 83% (+21), cooperation from 59% to 80% (+21), and independence from 55% to 77% (+22). These findings affirm that contextually designed classroom management strategy training can make a tangible and measurable contribution to improving teacher competence and student character in high-performing elementary schools located within wetland ecoregions.

Keyword: character development; classroom management; high-performing school; teacher training; wetland area

Abstrak. Permasalahan manajemen kelas yang kurang efektif dapat menghambat upaya pembentukan karakter siswa, terutama di Sekolah Dasar Negeri (SDN) Unggul yang berada di kawasan lahan basah seperti Kecamatan Banjarmasin Utara. Karakteristik lingkungan yang khas menuntut adanya strategi pengelolaan kelas yang lebih adaptif dan kontekstual. Kegiatan pengabdian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kapasitas guru melalui pelatihan strategi manajemen kelas yang mendukung penguatan karakter siswa. Metode yang digunakan meliputi pelatihan partisipatif melalui penyampaian materi, diskusi kelompok, studi kasus, dan praktik langsung di kelas. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan peningkatan kompetensi guru yang signifikan. Rata-rata pemahaman manajemen kelas meningkat dari 65,2 menjadi 85,6 (+20,4), kemampuan penerapan strategi karakter naik dari 58,4 menjadi 82,8 (+24,4), dan sikap proaktif terhadap inovasi meningkat dari 60,1 menjadi 87,2 (+27,1). Dampaknya terhadap siswa juga terukur secara jelas. Observasi karakter menunjukkan peningkatan pada indikator disiplin dari 68% menjadi 85% (+17), tanggung jawab dari 62% menjadi 83% (+21), kerja sama dari 59% menjadi 80% (+21), dan kemandirian dari 55% menjadi 77% (+22). Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pelatihan strategi manajemen kelas yang dirancang secara kontekstual dapat memberikan kontribusi nyata dan terukur dalam meningkatkan kompetensi guru serta karakter siswa di sekolah dasar unggul yang berada di wilayah ekoregion lahan basah.

INTRODUCTION

Character education is a key foundation of Indonesia's national education system. The goal of education is not limited to academic achievement but also to developing a personality with integrity, responsibility, and global competitiveness. This is reflected in the Independent Curriculum policy, which emphasizes strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile as the foundation for the entire learning process (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). At the elementary school level, character building needs to be instilled early through learning that addresses the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in a balanced manner.

However, the implementation of character education in schools often faces various challenges, as demonstrated by empirical findings in a study by Mulianti and Sulisworo (2023), which identified that most elementary schools still face classroom management issues that directly impact the low effectiveness of student character development. The study confirmed that weak classroom management is a major factor in the suboptimal implementation of character education. Non-adaptive classroom management can create a less conducive learning environment and reduce students' motivation to engage in positive behavior (Salama et al., 2025).

This problem is further complicated at Unggul State Elementary School (SDN Unggul), located in a wetland area, such as in North Banjarmasin District. Geographical conditions influenced by tidal currents, high rainfall, and seasonal flooding often disrupt learning activities. Research by Annisa et al. (2022) shows that schools in the Banjarmasin wetland area routinely face learning disruptions due to waterlogging and local flooding. Furthermore, transportation access for students and teachers is often hampered, particularly during the rainy season when neighborhood roads are flooded or only passable at certain times, as also reported by Rochwulaningsih et al. (2020). Limited educational infrastructure in wetland areas, including classrooms prone to dampness and learning facilities that are easily affected by flooding, has been shown to impact learning continuity. Furthermore, the socioeconomic background of the surrounding community contributes to the dynamic and diverse patterns of student interaction. In this context, teachers are required to possess classroom management competencies that not only maintain order but also create a learning climate that fosters character values contextually. Unfortunately, the training provided to teachers in the region still tends to be generic and oriented towards general methodological approaches. A study by Supadi et al. (2021) showed that most teacher training programs in South Kalimantan still fail to consider local geographic and social conditions, thus limiting their impact on improving classroom practice. Furthermore, an evaluation of teacher competency improvement programs in wetland areas indicated that generic training was insufficiently effective in addressing contextual learning challenges (Marcinkowski, 2025). However, various studies have shown that contextually-based training tailored to local school characteristics is more effective in improving classroom management quality (Arni et al., 2025). Therefore, specifically designed training interventions are needed to increase teachers' capacity in implementing character-based and localized classroom management strategies.

This community service activity aims to provide training to elementary school teachers in North Banjarmasin District on classroom management strategies that support sustainable student character development. This activity is designed with a participatory and contextual approach through a combination of theoretical presentations, case studies, hands-on practice, and reflection and evaluation sessions. This training is expected to empower teachers to navigate classroom dynamics more effectively while meaningfully instilling character values.

Consistent with the literature review, effective classroom management has been shown to play a crucial role in creating a productive learning environment and supporting student character development (Panggabean et al., 2022; Rao et al., 2024). Furthermore, a contextual character education approach is considered capable of increasing the relevance of moral values to students' daily lives (Lami'ah et al., 2025). Based on this description, this activity is based on the hypothesis that training in character-based and contextual classroom management strategies can significantly improve teachers' ability to create a conducive classroom atmosphere and encourage the development of positive character in students at a superior elementary school in a wetland area.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Type

This research was conducted using a training-based participatory educational approach, which emphasizes the active involvement of teachers as the primary subjects in the professional capacity building process. This approach was chosen because it has proven effective in developing teacher competencies through direct experience, reflection, and ongoing practice contextualized to challenges in the field (Vaughn, 2015). This method also aligns with the principles of andragogy, which argue that adult learning is more effective when based on real-life experiences and practical problem-solving (Knowles et al., 2015).

Activity Design

The series of activities was designed in four systematic stages:

1. Needs Identification: conducted through in-depth interviews and initial observations of teachers at SDN Unggul to identify actual problems in classroom management and student character development.
2. Training Material Design: developed based on initial findings, including character-based classroom management strategies and local values contextualized within the wetland area.
3. Training Implementation: consisting of theoretical material presentations, case studies, simulations, and hands-on classroom management practice in each school environment.
4. Implementation mentoring and evaluation: conducted periodically after the training to monitor strategy implementation, provide feedback, and evaluate the impact on teacher practice and student behavior.

Scope and Location

This activity focused on training in classroom management strategies to support student character development. The participants were 25 teachers from two excellent elementary schools (SDN Unggul) located in the wetland area of North Banjarmasin District: SDN Unggul Sungai Miai 11 and SDN Unggul Pangeran 1, South Kalimantan. The location selection took into account the geographical and social characteristics of the area that influence learning dynamics.

Instruments and Data Sources

The training materials used included a character-based classroom management strategy module, a case study guide, and teacher self-evaluation sheets. Training aids included laptops, projectors, whiteboards, and data collection instruments, including observation sheets, pre- and post-test questionnaires, and interview guides. The pre- and post-test questionnaires used a four-level Likert scale designed to measure teachers' understanding of classroom management concepts, their ability to implement character strategies, and their proactive attitudes toward innovation. The instrument's content validity was assessed by two elementary education experts and one classroom management expert, with Aiken's V values ranging from 0.83 to 0.92, indicating a high level of validity.

Data were collected through four main techniques:

1. Direct observation of teachers' classroom management practices after the training.
2. Pre and post-test questionnaires to measure teachers' increased knowledge and understanding of character-based classroom management strategies.
3. In-depth interviews to capture teachers' experiences, perceptions, and reflections during and after the training.
4. Documentation in the form of activity photographs, field notes, and recordings of strategy implementation in the classroom.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and percentage increase) to determine teacher competency development. Meanwhile, qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which included data reduction, thematic categorization, and narrative interpretation to describe changes in teacher behavior and the effectiveness of classroom management strategies in shaping student character. The coding process was conducted manually, referring to Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis guidelines. Two independent coders

participated in the data tagging process to enhance objectivity. Each coder conducted open coding separately, and then compared the results through discussion to agree on the final categories and themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Training Participant Profile

A total of 25 teachers from SDN Unggul in North Banjarmasin District participated in this activity. This number was considered representative of the conditions of elementary school teachers in wetland areas, while also allowing for intensive interaction, productive discussions, and hands-on practice during the training.

The majority of participants (60%) had a bachelor's degree, while the remaining 40% had completed their master's degrees. This composition indicates that most teachers have adequate academic backgrounds, supporting their readiness to absorb and implement the theory-based and practice-based training materials (Luthfi et al., 2025).

The participants' teaching experience ranged from 1 to 10 years, with the dominant age group being 30–45 years. Teachers in this range are considered to be in a productive professional phase and open to learning innovation (Anriyani et al., 2025). This makes this training highly targeted in developing long-term competencies, both in terms of pedagogy and strengthening character values in the classroom.

Changes in Teacher Competence: Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Table 1 presents quantitative data regarding changes in teacher competency before and after training.

Table 1 Data on Changes in Teacher Competence on a Scale of 0-100

Measured aspects	Average score pre	Average score post	Δ (Change)
Understanding classroom management	65.2	85.6	+20.4
Implementing character strategies	58.4	82.8	+24.4
Being proactive about innovation	60.1	87.2	+27.1

Understanding of Classroom Management showed a +20.4 point increase. This increase indicates that the training successfully broadened teachers' understanding of key concepts in classroom management. This achievement aligns with the findings of Vaughn's (2015) research, which emphasized the effectiveness of practice-based training in improving teachers' conceptual understanding.

The Implementation of Character Building Strategies increased by +24.4 points. This means that teachers not only understand the concepts but are also able to practice integrating character values into learning activities contextually. This aligns with the findings of Fauziah et al. (2025), who stated that the implementation of values-based learning strategies is more effective when accompanied by practical guidance in the classroom.

Proactive Attitude Toward Innovation, with the highest increase (+27.1), reflects that the training successfully fostered teachers' motivation and readiness for change. According to Joyce & Showers (2002), this attitude is an important indicator of long-term training success, as innovative teachers will continue to experiment and adapt to learning challenges.

Improvement in Student Character Indicators

After teachers implemented the strategies, observations were conducted on students' character development over four weeks. The results are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2 Data on Student Character Improvement on a Scale of 0-100

Character indicator	Before (%)	After (%)	Δ (Change)
Discipline	68	85	+17
Responsibility	62	83	+21
Cooperation	59	80	+21
Independence	55	77	+22

Student discipline increased by 17%, reflecting the success of strategies such as formulating classroom rules with students and consistently implementing them. This reinforces the theory of Emmer & Evertson (2016), which emphasizes the importance of clear behavioral expectations in establishing classroom order. Responsibility increased by 21%. Character-based classroom management strategies that provide space for reflection and accountability for actions have proven effective, aligning with the character education partnership approach (Lickona, 1991).

Cooperation increased significantly (21%), reflecting the influence of collaborative activities such as group discussions and social simulations. This approach is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive and character development.

Independence, the indicator with the highest increase (+22%), indicates that students are increasingly able to make decisions and take responsibility for their learning. Independent learning strategies such as task selection and personal reflection are believed to support this achievement (Montessori, 1967).

The average increase in student character indicators of +20.25% strengthens evidence that teacher training based on classroom management strategies directly contributes to student character development, particularly in geographically challenging environments such as wetlands.

Interpretation and Implications

The average increase in teacher competency scores of +20 to +27 points reflects the training program's effectiveness in developing three key domains of teacher competency: cognitive (conceptual knowledge of classroom management and character education), affective (attitudes and reflective awareness of the importance of a valued learning environment), and conative (the ability to implement classroom management strategies in real-world practice). These findings support a study by Shank (2005), which asserted that effective professional development must target all three domains to have a transformative impact on teacher behavior.

Strategies used in the training, such as activity-based classroom zone planning, strengthening classroom rules and agreements, and implementing a non-material reward system (verbal praise, social responsibility), have been shown to create a more positive, inclusive, and participatory classroom climate. This aligns with Santrock's (2011) perspective, which emphasizes that good classroom management creates a sense of safety, increases intrinsic motivation, and reduces disruptive behavior. A study by Simonsen et al. (2008) also showed that positive management strategies were strongly correlated with increased student academic engagement and a decrease in behavioral disorders.

Furthermore, improvements in student character, particularly in aspects of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and caring, reinforce Lickona's (1991) principle that character cannot be instilled solely through verbal instruction but must be fostered in a learning environment that supports the consistent practice of values. A structured, consistent classroom environment, and teacher role models in implementing these values are key tools for character formation.

These findings align with research by Tuuk and Ratulangi (2025), which demonstrated that contextually based teacher training in remote areas significantly impacted student character development. A recent study by Rahman et al. (2017) in a coastal area also revealed that a training approach that considers the local context, including geographical and cultural challenges, resulted in improved learning quality and more sustainable student character development.

While short-term results show positive results, ongoing monitoring and evaluation over a period of 6 to 12 months is needed to gauge the sustainability of strategy implementation in the classroom. This aligns with the advice of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasized that teacher training only has long-term impact if accompanied by a system of mentoring and periodic professional reflection.

Therefore, the character-based classroom management strategies developed in this training are recommended to be systematically integrated into school programs and curricula, and replicated in character education development policies in wetland areas and other 3T (underdeveloped, frontier, outermost) areas.

CONCLUSION

The results of the classroom management strategy training provided to teachers at Unggul Elementary School in the wetland area of North Banjarmasin District indicate that the program was effective in significantly improving teacher competency. This improvement was reflected in the increase in scores for understanding classroom management from 65.2 to 85.6 (+20.4), the ability to apply character strategies from 58.4 to 82.8 (+24.4), and the increase in proactive attitudes toward innovation from 60.1 to 87.2 (+27.1). In addition to improving teacher competency, the impact on students was also clearly measurable. Character observations revealed improvements in discipline (+17), responsibility (+21), cooperation (+21), and independence (+22). These findings indicate that the classroom management strategies practiced after the training not only improved teachers' pedagogical skills but also created a learning environment that better supported students' character development. Thus, this study confirms that contextually designed training tailored to the characteristics of wetland areas can significantly contribute to improving the quality of classroom management and developing student character. Similar training programs are recommended to be implemented on an ongoing basis with the support of long-term monitoring and evaluation, and integrated into school and regional policies to strengthen the educational ecosystem that supports systemic character development.

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