JSE
Vol. 7, No. 1.1, (2026), pp. 1-17
ISSN: 2745-5351
https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.798

Management of Student Character Development Through Innovative Habituation Programs in Two Indonesian Elementary Schools

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Abstract. Student character development is a core aim of basic education, yet habituation programs in elementary schools are often run as sporadic activities rather than as managed programs. This study describes and analyzes how character development through innovative habituation is managed according to Terry's functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (POAC) at two Indonesian elementary schools: SD Negeri Sukalaksana in rural Cianjur Regency and SD Negeri Cihideung in peri-urban Bandung Regency. A qualitative multi-site case study collected data from sixteen informants, comprising principals, teachers, and parents, through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document study. The data were analyzed with the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, and trustworthiness was established through source and technique triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Planning was based on the identification of student behavioral problems; organizing distributed roles among the principal, homeroom and subject teachers, and student Character Ambassadors; actuating combined routine, spontaneous, and integrated habituation supported by role modeling and kindness-based leadership; and controlling relied on anecdotal records, staff reflection, and parent liaison books. The two schools shared the same managerial logic but delivered it through channels shaped by their settings. Both showed three administrative weaknesses: no measurable written indicators, no formal organizational chart for the program, and no standardized behavioral assessment rubrics. The study concludes that habituation managed through the POAC cycle is effective in shaping student character, provided that practical strength is matched by administrative formalization.

Keywords: Character Development, Educational Management, Elementary Schools, Habituation, Innovative Habits.

1 Introduction

Character education serves as a foundation of the basic education system, functioning not as a supplementary curriculum but as a core dimension of human development. In contemporary educational paradigms, the objective of schooling extends beyond the transmission of cognitive knowledge and is oriented toward the formation of attitudes,

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ISSN: 2745-5351
https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.798

moral values, discipline, responsibility, and social awareness among students [1], [2]. Elementary schools hold a strategic position in this developmental continuum. As the primary formal socialization agent after the family, the elementary school environment is where children first systematically encounter societal norms, ethical boundaries, and collaborative expectations. Character traits formed during these years tend to persist into adulthood. Shaping character through planned, sustainable, and well-managed educational activities is therefore a necessity rather than an option for preparing a generation capable of navigating the moral complexities of the 21st century [3].

One of the most widely recognized strategies for character building is the implementation of habituation programs (program pembiasaan). Habituation is considered effective because it operates on the principle of consistent, repetitive behavioral conditioning integrated into the daily lives of students. Through daily routines, values are not merely taught abstractly but are experienced, so that positive habits gradually consolidate into stable character traits. Through habituation, core values such as religiosity, punctuality, academic responsibility, honesty, and social empathy can be naturalized within the student's behavioral repertoire [4]. Empirical studies in the Indonesian context support this proposition: school-based habituation has been shown to shape student character most strongly when the routines practiced at school are reinforced by the family environment, which indicates that habituation is an institutional arrangement rather than a classroom technique [5].

Habituation, however, must move beyond rote repetition to become innovative. Innovative habituation requires contextual relevance, active student engagement, and adaptability to contemporary challenges, so that students understand the intrinsic value of their actions rather than complying out of fear of punishment. This requirement has become more pressing with the national policy direction that frames character formation as a set of cultivated daily habits, an approach whose implementation depends heavily on how each school converts the policy into school culture rather than into additional administrative routines [6]. Theoretically, the mechanism underlying habituation is well-established: behavior is acquired largely through observation and imitation of models in the learner's environment, which explains why the conduct of teachers and principals carries greater formative weight than verbal instruction [7].

Despite its theoretical efficacy, the practical implementation of habituation programs in elementary schools is marked by multidimensional challenges. Preliminary observations at SD Negeri Sukalaksana in Cianjur Regency and SD Negeri Cihideung in Bandung Regency revealed several systemic issues. These included weak consistency in the daily execution of habituation routines, uneven distribution of responsibility among the teaching staff, a lack of synergistic collaboration between the school and parents, and the absence of a systematic, data-driven evaluation mechanism. These managerial and operational deficits result in the suboptimal internalization of character values. Consequently, behavioral problems persist, ranging from a lack of concern for environmental cleanliness and diminished academic focus to the use of impolite language in peer interactions and, in more severe cases, instances of bullying. Addressing such behavioral deviations requires instructional leadership from the principal [8] and school management frameworks that actively prioritize the prevention of bullying and the promotion of a safe psychological climate [9].

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.798

The persistence of these character-related issues indicates that character development initiatives are often poorly managed, operating as sporadic, disjointed activities rather than cohesive institutional programs. While previous research has extensively documented the practical aspects of habituation activities in classrooms, studies positioning character development within the framework of educational management science remain comparatively sparse. Existing work tends to describe what schools do without analyzing how the four management functions are actually enacted, where they break down, and how they differ between schools operating under the same policy but in different environments. The success of any educational program, including habituation, is contingent upon how school leadership systematically plans, organizes, executes, and evaluates the initiative, which makes the application of classical management theory indispensable.

According to the management principles articulated by George R. Terry [10], effective organizational administration encompasses four sequential and interrelated functions: Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC). In the specific context of character development, planning involves conducting a needs assessment, setting clear moral objectives, and designing specific habituation activities. Organizing pertains to the distribution of roles, responsibilities, and authority among the principal, teachers, and school staff. Actuating deals with the execution of these routines and relies on the motivational and instructional leadership of educators. Controlling involves monitoring behavioral changes in students and assessing the efficacy of the program to inform continuous improvement [11]. Because the four functions operate as a cycle rather than a checklist, a weakness in any single function propagates to the others, which is precisely what makes a function-by-function examination analytically useful.

The integration of transformative education concepts is also relevant. Transformative education emphasizes 21st-century skills and competencies, requiring that character education produce not merely obedient students but critically conscious citizens capable of ethical reasoning [3], [12]. This transformation depends substantially on the leadership style of the school principal. Implementing a kindness-based leadership strategy has been shown to foster a nurturing school culture in which both teachers and students feel valued, thereby accelerating the internalization of positive character traits [13]. In addition, integrating values such as Tauhid (monotheism) and Ecopedagogy (environmental care) into the curriculum helps build a comprehensive character profile that respects both humanity and nature [14].

Accordingly, this research aims to describe and analyze the management of student character development through innovative habituation programs in elementary schools, using a comparative case study of SD Negeri Sukalaksana (Cianjur) and SD Negeri Cihideung (Bandung). The study is guided by four questions: how is character development through innovative habituation planned; how is it organized; how is it actuated; and how is it controlled at the two schools. By examining practices at these two institutions through the lens of Terry's POAC framework, the study seeks to provide empirical insight into the managerial mechanics of character education and to identify which elements of that management are consistent across sites and which are contingent on local conditions. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.798

educational leaders, policymakers, and teachers in developing more effective and sustainable character-building strategies.

2 Methods

2.1 Research Design and Sites

This research employed a qualitative approach utilizing a descriptive-analytical case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to gain a holistic understanding of the complex and dynamic processes involved in the management of student character development, where the object of inquiry is meaning and habituated practice rather than measurable frequency. A multi-site case study method was used to explore the phenomena occurring at two distinct educational institutions: SD Negeri Sukalaksana in Cianjur Regency and SD Negeri Cihideung in Bandung Regency, both in West Java. This design follows the logic of multiple-case study in which each site is first treated as a complete case and analyzed on its own terms before a cross-case synthesis is developed, so that the comparison rests on two independently grounded analyzes rather than on an averaged account [15]. The design is summarized in Fig. 1.

The two sites (Table 1) were selected because they operate under the same national policy framework while differing in geographical and socio-cultural setting. SD Negeri Sukalaksana is located in a rural area of Cianjur Regency with a predominantly agrarian parent community and relatively limited facilities. SD Negeri Cihideung is situated in a peri-urban area of Bandung Regency with a more occupationally diverse parent community and better access to external resources. This contrast was deliberate: holding the policy constant while varying the school environment allows the study to distinguish managerial elements that are invariant from those that must be adapted to local conditions.

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.798

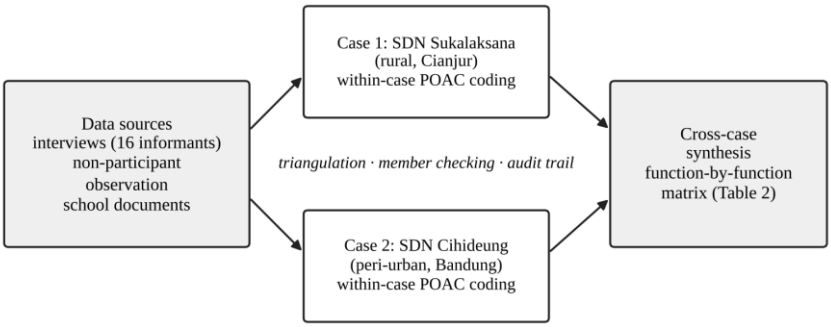


Fig. 1. Multi-site case study design: within-case analysis of each school followed by a function-by-function cross-case synthesis.

Table 1. Research sites, informants, and data collection

Aspect	SD Negeri Sukalaksana	SD Negeri Cihideung
Location	Rural area, Cianjur Regency, West Java	Peri-urban area, Bandung Regency, West Java
Parent community	Predominantly agrarian	Occupationally diverse
Facilities and resources	Relatively limited	Better access to external resources
Informants	Principal, classroom teachers, subject teachers, parents	Principal, classroom teachers, subject teachers, parents
Data collection	Semi-structured interviews (40–70 min); non-participant observation on different weekdays; document study	Semi-structured interviews (40–70 min); non-participant observation on different weekdays; document study
Documents examined	Vision and mission, program blueprints, codes of conduct, schedules, anecdotal records, liaison books, meeting minutes, photographs	Vision and mission, program blueprints, codes of conduct, schedules, anecdotal records, liaison books, meeting minutes, photographs

2.2 Informants and Data Collection

The subjects of this research encompassed key stakeholders directly involved in the educational ecosystem, specifically the school principals, classroom teachers, subject teachers, and selected parents. Subject selection was conducted using a purposive sampling technique. The primary criterion for selection was that informants possessed

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https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.798

direct, relevant involvement and authoritative knowledge regarding the planning, organization, execution, and evaluation of the school's character habituation programs. An additional criterion required at least two years of involvement at the school, so that informants could describe change over time rather than a single snapshot. In total, sixteen informants participated.

Data collection was executed through three primary techniques. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit accounts of the POAC functions from the perspectives of principals, teachers, and parents, each interview lasting between forty and seventy minutes and recorded with the informants' permission. Non-participant observation was carried out to witness the daily climate of the school environment, instructional processes, student interactions, and the execution of habituation practices such as morning greetings, communal prayers, and cleanliness routines; observation was conducted across different days of the week so that both daily and weekly routines could be captured. Documentation studies were used to review official school records, including vision and mission statements, character program blueprints, codes of conduct, daily schedules, anecdotal record books, student liaison books, meeting minutes, and photographic evidence.

The three techniques were deliberately combined so that claims made in interviews could be tested against observed practice and against written records. This mattered particularly for the organizing and controlling functions, where informant accounts of how roles were distributed and how behavior was monitored could only be assessed by inspecting whether corresponding documents existed. Field notes were written immediately after each visit, and interview recordings were transcribed verbatim before coding.

2.3 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The collected data were analyzed qualitatively using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which comprises three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification [16]. Raw data from the field were first filtered and reduced in accordance with the POAC theoretical framework, with sub-codes emerging inductively for themes such as role modeling, parental involvement, and documentation gaps. The data were then displayed through descriptive narratives and comparative matrices that juxtaposed the two sites function by function, which made convergent and divergent patterns visible. Conclusions were drawn from the emerging patterns and continuously verified against the data corpus.

To guarantee the trustworthiness of the findings, the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were applied [17]. Credibility was pursued through source triangulation, cross-verifying information among principals, teachers, and parents, and through technique triangulation, cross-checking interview claims against observable realities and written documents; prolonged engagement at both sites and member checking of interview summaries with key informants were also conducted [18]. Transferability was addressed by providing thick description of each school's context. Dependability was supported by maintaining an audit trail of

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ISSN: 2745-5351
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instruments, transcripts, and coding decisions, and confirmability was strengthened through peer debriefing with colleagues in educational management who were not involved in the data collection.

2.4 Research Ethics

Research ethics were observed throughout. Permission was obtained from the relevant education offices and from each school prior to data collection; informants were informed of the purpose of the research and of their right to withdraw; consent was secured; and the identities of individual teachers, parents, and students are not disclosed. Observation was conducted so as not to disrupt teaching and learning, and documents containing personal student data were examined on school premises without being copied.

3 Results

3.1 Planning Character Development Programs

The findings reveal that the management of character development at both SD Negeri Sukalaksana and SD Negeri Cihideung begins with a deliberate and structured planning phase. Planning is not treated as an administrative formality; it functions as a strategic response to observable student behavior. At the beginning of the academic year, the school leadership conducts a needs assessment in which teachers report prevalent behavioral issues observed during the previous year, such as tardiness, lack of respect for peers, littering, and declining academic responsibility. On the basis of this problem identification, the schools formulate character development goals aligned with the vision and mission of the institution.

To address the identified issues, the schools design a series of innovative habituation activities. The planning process involves drafting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for daily, weekly, and monthly routines. Planning the Morning Greeting Culture (Budaya Senyum, Salam, Sapa), for example, requires scheduling which teachers will stand at the school gates each morning. The planning phase also involves formulating strategies for parental involvement. Recognizing that character education cannot stop at the school gates, the principals initiate early-semester meetings with the School Committee and parents to socialize the planned habits, so that parents understand the behavioral targets and can reinforce these expectations at home, creating a synchronized set of expectations for students.

Document analysis nevertheless identified a consistent limitation at both sites. Although the conceptual direction of planning was clear and well understood by staff, the resulting plans were recorded largely as activity lists and schedules rather than as targets with measurable indicators. Neither school had formulated behavioral baselines or success criteria against which annual progress could be compared. When asked how they would know whether a habituation program had succeeded, informants at both schools answered in terms of general impressions of student conduct rather than in

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terms of recorded change, which indicates that the weakness lies in the documentation of planning rather than in its substance.

3.2 Organizing Roles and Responsibilities

Following planning, the organizing function is implemented to ensure the effective mobilization of human resources. Organizing involves the delineation of roles, responsibilities, and authority among school staff. The school principal acts as coordinator and policy director, holding ultimate responsibility for the program's success, and delegates operational tasks to the homeroom teachers (Wali Kelas), who serve as the primary character managers for their respective classrooms. Homeroom teachers organize classroom-level habits such as managing the daily cleaning roster (piket kelas) and facilitating morning prayer sessions.

Beyond the homeroom teachers, subject teachers such as those responsible for Religious Education and Physical Education are assigned specific roles to integrate character values into their subjects. The organizing phase also extends to the students themselves. Both schools implement a system in which senior students in grades five and six are appointed as Character Ambassadors or squad leaders to assist in organizing morning assemblies and maintaining order during recess. This arrangement distributes a portion of the managerial load to students and creates peer-level reinforcement of the expected conduct.

The research noted, however, that while the division of roles is clearly understood verbally and culturally among the staff, these roles are not consistently documented in a formal written organizational chart dedicated to the character program. Task distribution for the habituation program was not covered by a decree of the kind issued for other school functions. Despite this administrative gap, coordination operates smoothly through regular staff briefings and active messaging groups, demonstrating a functional though informal organizational agility. The practical risk, as teachers at both schools acknowledged, is that this arrangement depends on the continuity of personnel: when a teacher who habitually performs a particular role is absent or transferred, the role is not always assumed by another.

3.3 Implementation of Innovative Habituation Programs

The actuating phase is where the planned character initiatives manifest in daily, observable actions. Habituation at both schools is executed consistently, integrating moral values into school life in three forms: routine, spontaneous, and integrated habituation, all of which rest on role modeling (Fig. 2). Routine habituations form the backbone of the program. Every morning, the schools enforce a greeting protocol in which teachers welcome students at the gate, followed by communal morning prayers and the recitation of nationalistic pledges before students enter the classroom. Weekly routines include Jumat Bersih (Clean Friday), in which students and teachers collaboratively clean the school premises, and Jumat Taqwa (Pious Friday), which involves communal religious activities such as the Dhuha prayer. These activities reflect the integration of ecological pedagogy (Ekopedagogi) and monotheistic values

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(Ketauhidan), teaching students to revere the Creator and to protect their environment [14].

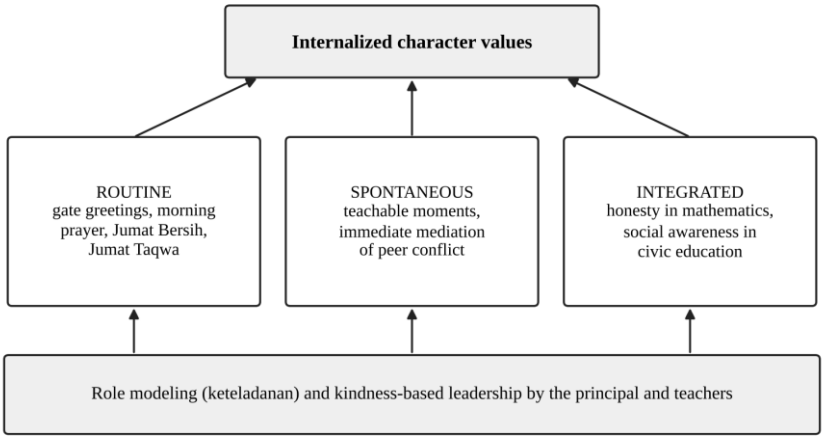


Fig. 2. The three forms of innovative habituation observed at both schools and the role modeling on which they rest.

What makes these programs innovative is the shift from passive compliance to active student engagement. Rather than teachers simply penalizing students for littering, students are given responsibility for managing mini waste banks or maintaining small vertical gardens outside their classrooms. This approach transfers ownership of the routine to the students and builds intrinsic responsibility. Spontaneous habituation occurs continuously: teachers are prepared to use teachable moments, so that when a student drops an item another is encouraged to help, and when a conflict arises during play teachers mediate immediately, modeling conflict resolution and empathy. This spontaneous guidance is important in preventing escalation into aggressive behavior and functions as a proactive strategy of character management [19] and of bullying prevention [9].

The actuating phase relies substantially on role modeling (keteladanan). Implementation succeeds because principals and teachers participate rather than merely instruct: during Jumat Bersih the principal is observed collecting litter alongside students. This application of kindness-based leadership has a direct effect on teacher willingness to sustain the routines, and it is consistent with the theoretical expectation that modeled behavior is acquired through observation more readily than through verbal instruction [7]. Values are also integrated into the academic curriculum. Under the framework of the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), teachers incorporate themes of honesty into mathematics, for instance by having students assess their own work fairly, and themes of social awareness into civic education, so that character development is distributed across subjects rather than isolated in one.

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3.4 Evaluation, Monitoring, and Continuous Improvement

The controlling function is essential for measuring the efficacy of the habituation programs and ensuring their sustainability. At both schools the evaluation process is predominantly qualitative, relying on continuous monitoring, daily observation, and communal reflection rather than on quantitative testing. Monitoring is conducted primarily by homeroom teachers, who act as frontline evaluators of student behavior. Teachers use daily anecdotal records (buku catatan anekdot) to document behavioral deviations and notable displays of good character. When a student consistently arrives late or exhibits disruptive behavior, the teacher records this and addresses it initially through personal counseling. Conversely, students who demonstrate honesty, such as returning lost money, are publicly acknowledged during Monday assemblies to reinforce the behavior.

Institutional reflection occurs during weekly or monthly staff meetings led by the principal. In these sessions teachers share observations, discuss challenges, and formulate solutions collectively. When a particular habituation activity such as the silent reading period loses effectiveness, the staff evaluates the cause and makes adjustments, which demonstrates organizational adaptability. This feedback loop is a component of transformative education, ensuring that the school remains responsive to the changing needs of the student body [3], [20].

The evaluation phase also involves parents. The schools use student liaison books (buku penghubung) and parent-teacher messaging groups to communicate behavioral updates. When a student exhibits persistent negative behavior, parents are invited to the school for a collaborative counseling session, so that corrective measures are synchronized between home and school. Teachers at both sites reported that this channel functions reliably for individual cases but is used less systematically to report on the progress of the habituation program as a whole [21].

The research identified a notable weakness in the controlling phase: the absence of standardized, objective evaluation instruments. While qualitative observations are rich and meaningful, the lack of specific rubrics or formal checklists makes it difficult to measure the overall success of the program from year to year, and evaluation can become dependent on individual teacher perception. The consequence observed in practice was inconsistency: the same behavior was described differently by different teachers, and the character descriptions entered on student report cards varied in stringency between classes. Despite this limitation, the controlling mechanisms in place are functional in identifying issues and implementing immediate, practical interventions.

3.5 Cross-Site Comparison of Management Practices

Compared across sites, the two schools converge on the substance of all four management functions and on the three administrative weaknesses identified above, but differ in the resources and channels through which the functions are delivered. The convergences indicate which practices are essential to managing character development

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ISSN: 2745-5351
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through habituation, while the divergences indicate which practices are shaped by the school's setting, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Cross-site comparison of character development management

Management Function	SDN Sukalaksana (Cianjur)	SDN Cihideung (Bandung)
Planning	Needs assessment emphasizing discipline and environmental care; targets set as activity schedules	Needs assessment emphasizing peer relations and academic responsibility; targets set as activity schedules
Organizing	Roles distributed through direct briefing; strong reliance on personal familiarity among a small staff	Roles distributed through briefing and messaging groups; coordination spread across more staff
Actuating	Agrarian environment used as a learning resource; cultivation and cleanliness routines prominent	Greater use of external partners and digital media; explicit attention to peer interaction
Controlling	Monitoring through daily observation and face-to-face contact with parents	Monitoring through anecdotal records and parent-teacher messaging groups
Shared weaknesses	No measurable indicators, no formal organizational chart, no assessment rubrics	No measurable indicators, no formal organizational chart, no assessment rubrics

The pattern in Table 2 indicates that environment influences the delivery channel rather than the managerial logic. At SD Negeri Sukalaksana, the agrarian setting is used as a pedagogical resource, with cultivation and cleanliness routines carrying much of the character load, and parental involvement operates mainly through face-to-face contact at the school. At SD Negeri Cihideung, the more diverse parent community and better connectivity allow greater reliance on digital communication and on external partners, while the larger range of student backgrounds requires more explicit attention to peer relations. That both schools nevertheless exhibit the same three documentation gaps suggests these gaps are not caused by local conditions but reflect a more general pattern in which character programs are managed culturally rather than administratively.

4 Discussion

The findings from SD Negeri Sukalaksana and SD Negeri Cihideung provide an empirical foundation for discussing the management of character development in elementary education. Analyzed through the lens of George R. Terry's POAC framework [10], the data indicate that the formation of student character is closely linked to the systematic application of management principles. Character formation cannot be left to chance; it requires deliberate and structured organizational processes. The contribution of examining two sites is that it separates what is essential in this

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ISSN: 2745-5351
https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.798

process from what is contingent: the four functions and their three documentation weaknesses appeared at both schools, whereas the channels of delivery varied with setting.

Regarding the planning function, both schools demonstrated that character education must be grounded in observed reality. By conducting needs assessments based on actual student behavioral data, the schools avoided implementing generic, disconnected programs. This is consistent with the principle, set out by Mulyasa [19], that character education strategies must be structured to address the specific developmental needs of students in their particular context. It must be noted, however, that while conceptual planning was strong, its translation into detailed measurable indicators was limited. As Lickona [4] argues, character development requires intentionality; without specific written targets, planning remains abstract and resists evaluation. The strategic decision to involve parents during the planning phase was nevertheless significant, since synchronizing expectations between home and school is a recognized condition for the effectiveness of character programs [22].

In the organizing phase, the research highlights the importance of distributed leadership. The principals at both sites mobilized their human capital by delegating character-building tasks to homeroom teachers and subject specialists, which reflects the assertion that effective organizing clarifies who is to do what, who reports to whom, and where decisions are made [23]. Read more precisely, what occurred at both schools corresponds to leadership practice distributed across multiple actors and situations rather than to simple delegation from a single leader, which is the condition under which an organization can sustain a program without the continuous presence of its initiator [24]. The organization of students into peer-leadership roles extends this distribution further, allowing positive peer influence to reinforce the normalization of good habits. The informal communication networks compensated for the absence of formal organizational charts, but the absence remains consequential: distributed practice that is not documented is vulnerable to staff turnover.

The actuating phase displayed the most significant pedagogical dynamics. The success of the innovative habituation programs rested on two pillars: role modeling and the integration of values into the curriculum. The principals' use of kindness-based leadership [13] was evident in practice. By leading through empathetic example rather than authoritarian instruction, the principals induced teachers to engage willingly in the habituation routines, and teachers who felt supported transmitted that psychological safety to students. Such a supportive environment is a critical factor in school management aimed at preventing bullying and aggressive behavior [9]. The theoretical significance of this finding is that it locates the effectiveness of habituation in observational learning rather than in repetition as such [7]: the routines worked because they were performed by credible models, which explains why principal participation mattered more than the frequency of the activity.

The integration of Ekopedagogi and Ketauhidan further demonstrates a holistic approach to character building, extending the moral field beyond human-to-human interaction to include relations with nature and with the divine. This is consistent with the aims of transformative education within the Independent Curriculum, which seeks to produce ethically capable citizens [3], [12]. It also aligns with the national policy

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ISSN: 2745-5351
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direction that treats character as a set of cultivated daily habits; the experience of schools implementing that policy indicates that it succeeds to the extent that it is absorbed into existing school culture rather than added as a parallel program [6], which is precisely the pattern observed at both research sites.

The controlling function revealed a divergence between practical effectiveness and administrative formality. The schools performed well in qualitative, real-time evaluation: daily anecdotal records and weekly staff reflection enabled immediate pedagogical adjustment when a strategy was not working, which is characteristic of the responsive management of learning quality described by Iriantara et al. [25]. However, as Arikunto [26] emphasizes, evaluation must ultimately rely on valid and reliable data for long-term institutional decisions. Reliance on subjective teacher observation introduces a risk of bias, which was observable in the inconsistent character descriptions recorded on report cards across classes. To raise the management of character development from functional to robust, schools should develop standardized observable behavioral rubrics, defining for example the specific criteria constituting responsible behavior, so that all teachers assess character consistently. Such instruments would also supply the baseline data that the planning function currently lacks, closing the loop between the first and last functions of the cycle.

In synthesis, the management of character development through innovative habituation at these schools supports Terry's management theory in an educational context. The POAC functions operate as a cycle in which planning sets the direction, organizing allocates capacity, actuating carries out the process, and controlling supplies the corrective information (Fig. 3). The administrative deficiencies observed do not negate the positive effect of these programs on students' daily conduct, but they do indicate where the cycle is weakest, namely at the two points that require written instruments.

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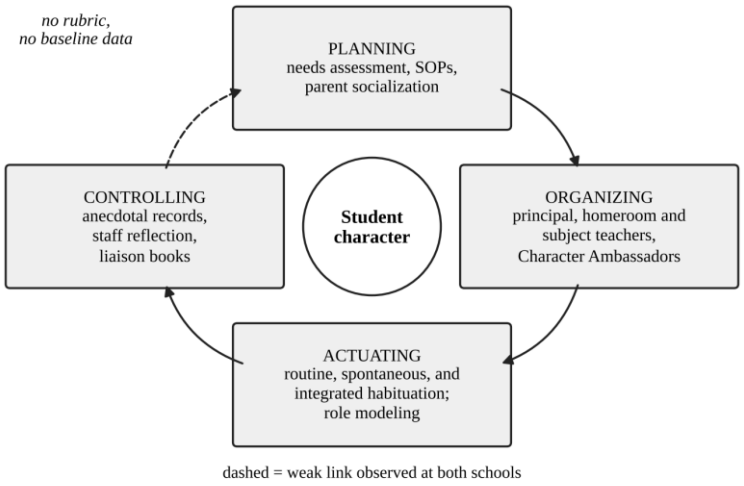


Fig. 3. The POAC cycle in character habituation at the two schools; the dashed link marks the missing rubrics and baseline data that prevent controlling from informing the next planning cycle.

4.1 Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The research involved two elementary schools, so the findings are analytically rather than statistically generalizable; the data rely substantially on the accounts of school personnel and parents, with student voice represented in a limited way; and behavioral outcomes were not measured longitudinally, so conclusions about the durability of character change remain inferential.

5 Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the management of student character development through innovative habituation programs is effective when executed systematically using George R. Terry's management functions: planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. These four functions are interconnected and serve as the foundation for directing, implementing, and sustaining character education in elementary schools.

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ISSN: 2745-5351
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The research demonstrates that the planning function is applied through the identification of student behavioral needs and the formulation of targeted habituation activities, establishing a clear direction for the school year. Organizing is realized through the distribution of roles among the principal, teachers, students, and parents, fostering a collaborative educational ecosystem. The actuating phase is the most active, with habituation practiced consistently through routine, spontaneous, and integrated activities; the use of kindness-based leadership and teacher role modeling ensures that values are internalized by students. The controlling function provides oversight through continuous qualitative observation, anecdotal recording, and communal reflection, allowing responsive program adjustment.

The comparative dimension of the study yields a further conclusion. The managerial logic of character habituation was identical at both sites, while the channels through which it was delivered varied with the schools' geographical and social setting: a rural school used its agrarian environment as a pedagogical resource and relied on face-to-face contact with parents, whereas a peri-urban school drew more on digital communication and external partners. Schools adopting this model should therefore replicate the managerial structure rather than another school's specific program design.

The study also concludes that while practical execution is robust, the administrative formality of the management process requires optimization. The absence of measurable written plans, of a formal organizational chart for the program, and of standardized behavioral assessment instruments represents a consistent area for growth at both sites. Practically, it is recommended that schools formulate character indicators with behavioral baselines during planning, legitimize task distribution for the habituation program through a formal decree, and develop observable assessment rubrics that produce comparable data across classes and across years. Future research is encouraged to design and test such rubrics, to examine school-family synergy in sustaining habituation at home, and to conduct longitudinal or mixed-methods studies capable of measuring the durability of behavioral change. When systematically managed, innovative habituation moves beyond routine and reshapes the moral and behavioral trajectory of elementary school students.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, I.S. and I.W.; methodology, I.S. and I.W.; investigation and data curation, I.S.; formal analysis, I.S.; writing—original draft preparation, I.S.; writing—review and editing, I.W.; supervision, I.W. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the article.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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ISSN: 2745-5351
https://doi.org/10.58905/jse.v7i1.1.798

Research Ethics and Informed Consent

Permission was obtained from the relevant education offices and from both schools before data collection, informants were informed of the purpose of the research and of their right to withdraw, and consent was secured. The identities of individual teachers, parents, and students are not disclosed, and documents containing personal student data were examined on school premises without being copied.

Data Availability Statement

Anonymized interview transcripts, field notes, and coding records are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Student records are not available because they contain personal data of minors.

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