



## Character Education Management Strategies to Establish a Positive School Culture in Vocational High Schools in Merauke Regency, South Papua

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the management strategies of character education as a foundation for fostering a positive school culture in vocational high schools (SMK) in Merauke Regency, South Papua. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how character education is systematically planned, organized, implemented. A qualitative research approach was adopted to capture the depth and complexity of character education management in three purposively selected vocational schools: SMK Negeri 1 Business and Management, SMK Negeri 2 Tourism, and SMKS Santo Antonius Merauke. The validity of findings was strengthened using source, method, and time triangulation, and data were analyzed following the Miles and Huberman interactive model, encompassing data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. Findings reveal that character education planning in SMK Merauke is highly participatory, involving all school elements and aligning character values with the institutional vision, local wisdom, and workforce needs. Such approaches are critical for building inclusive, ethical, and competitive school environments, particularly in multicultural and rapidly changing regions like Merauke.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Character education in schools holds significant importance in preparing a generation that excels not only academically but also possesses integrity and the ability to adapt in the era of globalization. In the Indonesian context, cultural diversity and local values are factors that strengthen the need for a relevant and contextual approach to character education (Fikri et al., 2023). The government has reaffirmed its commitment through policies such as the Mental Revolution Movement and the Pancasila Student Profile, which require the instillation of character values in students (Lestari & Handayani, 2023). Challenges such as deviant behavior, misuse of technology, and the threat of drugs further increase the urgency for schools to integrate character education into all aspects of learning (Irawati et al., 2022). Therefore, character education must be the main foundation of the national education system in order to shield students from the negative influences of the times.

At vocational schools (SMK) in Merauke Regency, South Papua, the implementation of character education faces complex dynamics, particularly due to the high incidence of bullying and weak social control within the school environment (Azhar et al., 2023). Previous research highlights that close collaboration between schools, families, and communities is essential to enhance the effectiveness of character education management strategies (Fikri et al., 2023). Furthermore, principals and teachers must serve as the main driving force for cultural change in schools, with the support of all educational stakeholders to create an environment that adapts to students' needs (Lestari & Kurnia, 2022). Such collaboration fosters a conducive atmosphere for the growth of positive character in schools.

Successful character education management strategies require a system that is well-planned, structured, and consistent, from the stages of planning and implementation to evaluation based on moral values and local culture (Azhar et al., 2023). The multicultural environment of Merauke necessitates an approach that considers the diversity of community norms and traditions so that character values can be more easily accepted by students (Lukitosari & Rahmat, 2024). The integration of national values and local wisdom helps students adapt and build harmonious social relationships (Lestari & Kurnia, 2022). With such strategies, the internalization of character will proceed optimally and sustainably.

In addition to moral aspects, developing students' environmental awareness has become a key focus, in line with the need to instill an understanding of the importance of maintaining cleanliness and the school environment (Ismail, 2021). The cultivation of this character can be integrated through routines and real practices within the school setting, so that students not only excel academically but also develop social responsibility (Hariandi et al., 2023). In this context, character education embedded in daily activities has proven effective in shaping positive behaviors and increasing student awareness (Elmontadzery et al., 2024). The strengthening of environmental values leads to the creation of a generation that is caring and proactive in social life.

In response to challenges such as bullying and deviant behavior in schools, character education based on local wisdom and participatory approaches

through extracurricular activities is highly necessary (Lukitosari & Rahmat, 2024). Activities that emphasize empathy, collaboration, and social responsibility have been shown to reinforce the understanding and practice of positive values among students (Gunawan, 2023). Moreover, student involvement in direct social activities provides contextual and meaningful opportunities for character learning (Hasnah et al., 2023). Therefore, positive behavioral changes can be achieved through real-life experiences gained by students at school.

The role of teachers in character education is highly strategic, especially in the era of Society 5.0, where teachers are expected to serve as role models, mentors, and facilitators of character learning (Sapdi, 2023). Through moral modeling and moral acting techniques, teachers can instill character values in students through interactions and real practices in the classroom (Pelealu, 2023). Teachers who are able to set good examples have a significant impact on the character formation of students (Muliadi & Nasri, 2023). The success of character education largely depends on the capacity and consistency of teachers as role models.

Synergy among schools, families, and the community is a crucial foundation in strengthening character education in secondary schools (Cahyani et al., 2024). Research indicates that parental involvement through joint activities or regular meetings can reinforce the implementation of character values both at home and at school (Kurniawan et al., 2024). In addition, the support of the community around the school can create an educational ecosystem that mutually supports character building (Ma'sumah et al., 2024). This cross-sector collaboration is a key factor in the success of sustainable character education.

Regular evaluation of character education programs is needed to ensure the effectiveness and real impact of the implemented strategies (Fatimah & Pratikno, 2022). Outcome-based assessments and feedback from students and parents help schools adjust their steps to be more effective in internalizing character values (Saidah et al., 2021). Participatory evaluation involving all parties ensures that character education programs are not merely administrative but genuinely bring about behavioral changes in students (Resmi et al., 2022). With an adaptive evaluation system, continuous improvement can be made according to needs.

The strengthening of character values through a planned and participatory management system is believed to enhance the competitiveness and integrity of the young generation in Merauke (Sinaga et al., 2023). When all elements of the school, family, and community work together, character education will positively affect the quality of human resources (Kamaruddin et al., 2022). The simultaneous reinforcement of national values and local culture will help students grow as individuals who are able to face contemporary challenges with strong character (Sutrisna, 2021). This forms the main foundation for building a competitive and high-integrity society.

The integration of Pancasila values into character education policies is a key strategy to build a positive, ethical, and inclusive school environment (Prakasa et al., 2023). The instillation of character through daily practices in schools plays a role in strengthening students' moral identity and reducing

deviant behavior (Farid & Rugaiyah, 2023). With an adaptive approach based on a multicultural environment, students in Merauke are expected to develop tolerant, responsible, and globally competitive characters (Silfia et al., 2024). All these efforts demonstrate the importance of character education management as the foundation for a positive and competitive school culture.

## **METODE**

This study employs a qualitative approach with the aim of providing a comprehensive understanding of character education management strategies in vocational high school settings. According to Moleong (2016), a qualitative approach enables researchers to describe phenomena verbally through data collected from observation, interviews, and documentation studies that are analyzed critically. The conclusion is that the qualitative approach is highly appropriate for deeply exploring the processes and practices of character education management in schools.

The research locations were purposively selected at three schools in Merauke Regency: SMK Negeri 1 Business and Management, SMK Negeri 2 Tourism, and SMKS Santo Antonius Merauke. Each school has unique characteristics in implementing character education, thus providing a varied picture of character management strategies in the South Papua region. The study was conducted from March to June 2025, with phases ranging from initial surveys, field data collection, to analysis and writing of results. The conclusion is that the selection of diverse locations strengthens the validity and depth of the research findings.

## **RESULT**

The research data regarding the strategies for managing character education to foster a positive school culture at Vocational High Schools (SMK) in Merauke Regency, South Papua, were obtained from direct interviews with principals, vice principals, teachers, and school staff, as well as through observation and documentation. Each informant provided different information according to their roles, resulting in a comprehensive picture of the implementation of character education at the three vocational high schools that were the research sites. The following research findings are divided into several main aspects:

### **Character Education Planning**

#### **a. Development of the Character Education Program**

Based on interviews with the principal of SMK Negeri 1 Business and Management, character education planning is carried out through annual work meetings involving all elements of the school, including the principal, vice principals, teachers, and the school committee. The principal explained:

"At the beginning of each academic year, we prepare a work plan, including a character education plan. All teachers are involved to ensure the program truly matches students' needs and the values to be developed."

A similar statement was expressed by the vice principal for student affairs at SMK Negeri 2 Tourism: "The preparation of habituation programs and instilling character values is done together with teachers and staff in work

meetings, then incorporated into the school program that must be implemented by the entire school community."

This work program is then detailed into various activities, such as school regulations, literacy programs, flag ceremonies, and religious activities. Observations showed that the character education program documents are available in the administration office, complete with agendas and meeting minutes.

The conclusion is that all schools plan character education in a participatory manner, involving all elements and documented in an annual work program integrated with the school agenda.

#### **b. Determination of Character Values and Goals**

Interviews with teachers indicated that the determination of character values is aligned with the school's vision and mission and the needs of the working world. A teacher at SMK Negeri 2 Tourism stated:

"The main values we instill are discipline, honesty, responsibility, and caring, as these values are highly needed in the workplace in the future."

The principal of SMKS Santo Antonius added:

"We also emphasize religious and tolerance values because our school is multicultural and religion-based."

Observations of the vision-mission documents and school programs proved the synchronization between the selected character values and the institution's vision. The conclusion is that the determination of character values is based on the school's vision-mission and the needs of the workforce, highlighting aspects of discipline, responsibility, and religiosity.

#### **Organization of Character Education**

##### **a. Role Distribution in Character Management**

The school's organizational structure greatly supports the implementation of character education. Interviews with the principal of SMK Negeri 1 Business and Management revealed:

"We clearly divide tasks, starting from the principal, vice principals for curriculum and student affairs, to homeroom teachers and subject teachers. Each party has a role in instilling and supervising students' character."

The vice principal of SMK Negeri 2 Tourism added that department coordinators are also involved in supervising the implementation of habituation programs in their respective departments. Observation of the school organizational structure documents proved there is a specific division of duties related to character education. The conclusion is that the organization of character education is carried out through a clear division of roles within the organizational structure so that all parties are actively involved and responsible.

##### **b. Internal Coordination and Communication**

Results of interviews with teachers at SMKS Santo Antonius stated:

"At the beginning of each week, there is a short meeting to evaluate the implementation of the character program and to convey the obstacles faced in class."

Observations of daily agenda books and meeting minutes showed that evaluation activities and internal communication are routinely conducted to ensure the smooth running of the character program.

The conclusion is that regular internal coordination and communication support the effective and adaptive implementation of character education.

### **Implementation of Character Education**

#### **a. Implementation of Habituation Programs**

Interviews with teachers at SMK Negeri 2 Tourism explained:

"The habituation program is implemented through various routine activities, such as morning literacy, flag ceremonies, group prayers, classroom duties, and school environment management."

In addition, incidental activities such as commemorating important days, religious competitions, and mass community service are also used as means to instill character values. Observations in the school environment found students actively involved in cleanliness programs and social activities. The conclusion is that the implementation of character education is integrated into both routine and incidental activities, so the habituation of positive values can be embedded in students' daily lives.

#### **b. Role Modeling by Teachers and Principals**

A teacher at SMKS Santo Antonius emphasized the importance of role modeling:

"The principal and teachers must be role models in behavior and speech, as students will imitate our conduct at school."

Interviews with students supported this:

"We find it easier to follow rules when we see that the teachers and principal are also disciplined."

Observations showed daily interactions between teachers, principals, and students were very harmonious and mutually respectful. The conclusion is that consistent role modeling by teachers and principals is a key factor in instilling character values in students.

### **Evaluation of Character Education**

#### **a. Monitoring and Assessment of Character**

Evaluation of character education implementation is carried out through direct observation, attitude assessments by homeroom teachers, and discussions among teachers. A teacher at SMK Negeri 1 Business and Management explained:

"Every semester, we assess the development of students' character, the results are discussed with other teachers, and used as a reflection for improving next year's programs."

Documentation showed the existence of attitude assessment books and character report cards for every student. The conclusion is that character education evaluation is conducted periodically and serves as a basis for developing more effective programs.

## **b. Evaluation Constraints**

A teacher at SMK Negeri 2 Tourism acknowledged there are still obstacles in character evaluation:

"The main constraints are limited time, less than optimal parental involvement, and the difficulty of objectively measuring character changes."

Observation confirmed that family involvement in character evaluation is still minimal.

The conclusion is that character education evaluation still needs improvement, especially in the aspects of family involvement and establishing indicators of character success.

## **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors**

### **a. Supporting Factors**

The success of the character program is strongly supported by the commitment of the principal, teacher involvement, and synergy with the school committee and the community. The principal of SMK Negeri 1 Business and Management stated:

"We continue to build cooperation with religious leaders and the community to strengthen the character values taught at school."

Observation proved the existence of outreach programs and cooperation between the school and the surrounding community. The conclusion is that collective support and collaboration among parties are the main strengths in reinforcing character education in schools.

### **b. Inhibiting Factors**

The inhibiting factors found include limited facilities, the cultural diversity of students, and the minimal role of families in character formation outside of school. A teacher at SMKS Santo Antonius stated:

"There are students who do not get character habituation at home, making it difficult for them to internalize the positive values built at school."

Field observations also showed that there are still inadequate facilities to support character habituation activities. The conclusion is that both external and internal obstacles remain challenges for the sustainability of character education management in SMK Merauke.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Character Education Planning**

The planning of character education in vocational high schools (SMK) in Merauke Regency always begins with dialogue and deliberation, allowing all stakeholders to contribute their perspectives and aspirations. In forums such as the annual work meeting, principals, teachers, and the school committee unify their perceptions so that character education does not merely become discourse, but is instead internalized into the school's vision (Fadillah et al., 2021). The character values developed are also tailored to the needs of the workforce and the local conditions of the students, so that the results are not only formally relevant but also functional in real life (Ni'mawati et al., 2020). Thus, cross-school collaboration becomes the main foundation to ensure that every decision in the planning of character education programs is truly applicable (Farid & Rugaiyah,

2023). In conclusion, collaborative planning is able to bring together the hopes of the school with the realities of students' needs.

The formulation of character programs always takes into account both the limitations and the potential of available resources in the school environment. Teachers, principals, and the school committee review input from the surrounding community so that the programs designed remain aligned with local societal developments (Maharani et al., 2024). Not only formal curricula, extracurricular activities are also structured to foster discipline, responsibility, and student solidarity, as can be seen in the management of various student clubs and intra-school organizations (Sholihah & Maulida, 2020). Field experience proves that when programs are designed by taking into account input from various parties, character values are more easily practiced in daily school activities (Azhar et al., 2023). Therefore, the success of character programs is greatly determined by sensitivity to the surrounding environment.

The management of character education is also characterized by innovation in teaching methods, such as through project-based learning models. Through project learning, students are invited to directly experience how to apply values such as responsibility and teamwork beyond theory (Tentama et al., 2024). In addition to classroom instruction, routine evaluations are conducted to monitor the effectiveness of the programs and allow for improvements each semester (Muawwanah & Darmiyanti, 2022). By carrying out continuous monitoring, schools can respond immediately if a program is not running optimally or if new needs arise among students (Hanifa et al., 2024). In conclusion, adaptive evaluation is the key to maintaining the relevance of character education.

On the other hand, family and community involvement serves as the main support for implementing character values outside of school. Parental support in various school agendas is essential so that the character messages delivered by teachers do not stop at school but are continued at home (Pertami et al., 2024). Experience in Merauke shows that collaboration between the school and parents can strengthen a culture of mutual respect and cooperation among students (Achmad et al., 2024). Additionally, schools anticipate potential social issues such as bullying by reinforcing local values that emphasize tolerance and togetherness (Sunaryati et al., 2024; Nurjanah & Pranesti, 2023). In conclusion, character education planning that involves families and the community has a broad impact on creating a positive school culture.

### **Organization of Character Education**

The organization of character education in SMK Merauke starts with strong leadership by the principal, who firmly delegates roles and responsibilities to all members of the school community. The principal not only coordinates teachers and staff but also optimizes the roles of vice principals, department coordinators, and homeroom teachers so that every line is responsible for running character programs (Azhar et al., 2023). This synergy is strengthened by involving the school committee as a bridge between the school and the community, allowing aspirations from outside the school to be channeled into the programs (Ni'mawati et al., 2020). With clear division of roles, the task of strengthening character does not fall on just one party. In conclusion, a systematic

organizational structure facilitates cross-role collaboration in character education management.

Within the school environment, good internal communication has proven to be the key to successful character management. Every week, teachers and staff regularly hold coordination meetings to monitor implementation and discuss obstacles encountered in the field (Afriansyah, 2024). Digital communication media such as messaging groups and the school portal help accelerate the flow of information so that no school member is left behind in understanding the programs (Annisa & Haryadi, 2023). Smooth coordination also encourages teachers and students to actively collaborate in implementing character activities both in the classroom and extracurriculars (Handayani, 2023). Thus, effective coordination and communication accelerate responses to challenges faced.

In addition to role distribution, organization also includes innovative strategies in adapting community-based learning models. Teachers in Merauke often integrate extracurricular activities such as scouting and youth scientific work into the character education agenda to actively engage students outside the classroom (Lestari & Mustika, 2021). This adaptive model is also strengthened by involving parents in social activities at school, leading to cross-environmental character education (Maharani et al., 2024). Research has shown that active participation from various community elements increases the internalization of character values among students (Hanifa et al., 2024). In conclusion, adaptive strategies strengthen the reach of character programs.

To ensure optimal organization, schools carry out evaluations and reflections on the organizational structure and the effectiveness of program implementation. At the end of each semester, all stakeholders are invited to evaluation meetings, including teachers, students, and the school committee (Fauzi et al., 2024). Evaluation not only focuses on technical implementation but also opens up opportunities to improve roles and communication if issues are identified. The results of these reflections serve as the basis for updating strategies for the following semester (Rahmah & Utami, 2022). Openness in evaluation strengthens the sense of ownership and commitment of all parties to the success of character education (Subarkah & Ahmad, 2022). In conclusion, continuous reflection and evaluation ensure the organization remains adaptive to the needs and dynamics of the school.

### **Implementation of Character Education**

The implementation of character education in SMK Merauke is integrated into daily activities through positive routines such as literacy, ceremonies, communal work, as well as incidental activities such as commemorations of national days and social actions (Sapdi, 2023). All school members—teachers, students, and education personnel—are involved to ensure values such as cooperation, discipline, and responsibility can be directly practiced (Siregar & Ulfa, 2022). These routines not only aim to build a conducive school culture but also strengthen social relationships between students and teachers. Thus, implementation integrated into every activity can reinforce students' positive character in daily life (Jannah et al., 2021). In conclusion, school routines are an effective means of internalizing character values.

The roles of teachers and principals are very important as role models and motivators in shaping students' character. Teachers' exemplary behavior in daily life encourages students to imitate positive values they observe, such as honesty, empathy, and respect (Apiyani, 2022). Studies have shown that educators' real behavior in the school environment has a strong impact on students' attitudes and behaviors both inside and outside the classroom (Wahfiyah & Pamungkas, 2023). Through direct interaction, teachers can link learning to real life and instill character more deeply (Muslihati, 2019). In conclusion, the exemplary conduct of teachers and school leaders is a core strategy in implementing character education.

Active student involvement in school activities enables them not only to be observers but also actors capable of applying character values. Various activities such as communal work, organizations, and social programs allow students to learn about solidarity, justice, and environmental awareness (Susilo & Ramadan, 2021). Social interaction in small groups provides students with opportunities to develop self-confidence, responsibility, and empathy (Utaminingsih & Rachmawaty, 2023). In addition, students learn to appreciate differences and understand the importance of tolerance through cooperation in extracurricular activities (Hasibuan, 2023). In conclusion, active involvement and direct experience strengthen the formation of students' character.

The success of character education implementation is also greatly influenced by the synergy among schools, parents, and the community. Teachers routinely communicate with parents to ensure that the values taught at school continue at home (Hanifa et al., 2024). A mutually supportive community creates a comprehensive and conducive learning environment for character building (Alamsyah et al., 2024). Through social projects involving students in the community, they gain practical experience in applying character values directly (Afriani et al., 2021). In conclusion, cross-environment collaboration expands the success of character education implementation.

#### **Evaluation of Character Education**

The evaluation of character education in SMK Merauke is conducted periodically using various methods such as attitude assessment, behavioral observation, and teacher discussions to comprehensively assess students' development (Sapdi, 2023). Each ongoing program is evaluated through direct observation in the classroom and school environment, so that the attainment of character values can be clearly determined (Farid & Rugaiyah, 2023). Joint discussions also enable teachers to share experiences and find solutions to emerging challenges during implementation (Cahyani et al., 2024). In conclusion, periodic evaluation using diverse methods strengthens character development efforts in schools.

Although evaluation is crucial, its implementation often faces challenges such as limited time and high administrative burdens. Teachers often have to divide their attention between character evaluation and other teaching duties, so that character assessment cannot be conducted optimally (Azhar et al., 2023). In addition, the lack of family involvement in the evaluation process also becomes an obstacle, making character strengthening at home less optimal (Astuti et al.,

2024). The complexity of these challenges demands that schools continuously seek efficient evaluation methods and involve multiple stakeholders (Sapuan et al., 2024). In conclusion, evaluation challenges must be addressed through innovation and broader involvement.

Character evaluation also requires a creative approach, as character changes cannot always be measured by conventional quantitative methods. The use of in-depth interviews and participatory observation are alternatives so that teachers' understanding of students' behaviors and attitudes becomes more comprehensive (Sulistiawati & Nasution, 2022). Teachers also engage in reflection sessions with students to assess self-progress and understand challenges faced in character development (Hanafiah et al., 2024). With holistic assessment strategies, a more complete picture of students' character can be obtained (Handayani, 2023). In conclusion, holistic evaluation is essential for effective character development.

The importance of involving students in the evaluation process can be seen from the regular reflection activities that encourage them to think critically about their behavior and personal development (Hariandi et al., 2023). Students are encouraged to self-evaluate, provide feedback on program implementation, and participate in group discussions about character values (Nugraha et al., 2022). In addition, the results of routine evaluations are used as the basis for decision-making to improve future strategies (Winarti et al., 2024; Genika & Dewi, 2024). In conclusion, active student involvement in evaluation increases the effectiveness of character formation and has a positive impact on school culture.

### **Key Supporting and Inhibiting Factors**

The main supporting factors in the success of character education at SMK Merauke are strong leadership commitment from the school administration, active roles of teachers, and the involvement of the school committee and community in school programs (Rosad, 2019). A visionary principal is able to provide clear direction in the implementation of character programs, while teachers serve as primary role models for students in every activity (Rahim et al., 2024). Synergy with the school committee and collaboration with the community make it easier for character values to be accepted by the entire school community (Azhar et al., 2023). In conclusion, the strength of synergy among school and community elements is the main factor in strengthening character education.

Teachers' roles are not limited to teaching, but also as mentors and motivators who instill character values through daily attitudes and interactions (Sapdi, 2023). Teachers who can adapt to the times and the needs of students, both in teaching methods and the use of technology, will have a positive impact on character development (Nur'aini et al., 2023). Moreover, ongoing teacher training helps them understand various new strategies in character education (Farisi et al., 2024). In conclusion, the continuous development of teachers' capacity is an important asset for the success of character education.

On the other hand, obstacles in implementing character education in SMK Merauke often stem from limited facilities and infrastructure, cultural diversity, and minimal family support (Ma'sumah et al., 2024; Gunawan et al., 2024; Marzuni & Romelah, 2023). Inadequate facilities can limit character activities,

especially those requiring special spaces and facilities. Additionally, the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds demands adaptive approaches so that character values can be accepted by all parties (Nurhidayat et al., 2024). The lack of family support often becomes a barrier to the internalization of character values outside school (Anugrah & Rahmat, 2024). In conclusion, these obstacles must be overcome through innovative approaches and intensive communication.

As a solution, schools develop programs based on local values and expand collaboration with various external parties, including government, non-governmental organizations, and the optimization of technology in character education (Jullyantama et al., 2024; Sagala et al., 2024; Chaerulisma et al., 2023). Programs that involve families and communities reinforce the habituation process of character values beyond the classroom (Firdaus et al., 2022; Rumiris et al., 2024). With innovation and collective participation, obstacles can be gradually overcome, allowing character education in SMK Merauke to run sustainably (Nakhma'Ussolikhah et al., 2024; Handayani, 2023). In conclusion, innovation, broad partnerships, and openness to challenges are the main keys to successful character education.

## **CONCLUSION**

The management of character education in vocational high schools (SMK) in Merauke Regency has proven to require comprehensive collaboration among principals, teachers, school committees, parents, and the community. Thorough and participatory planning, as well as adaptation to local needs and the challenges of the workforce, serve as a strong foundation for the creation of relevant and effective character education programs. All school elements play an active role, from organizing clear task structures and maintaining open internal communication, to strengthening adaptive learning models that involve the surrounding environment.

The implementation of character education is integrated into every school activity, supported by teachers' exemplary behavior and the active involvement of students in both social and extracurricular activities. The synergy between the school, families, and the community further reinforces the internalization of character values, thereby fostering a positive and inclusive school culture. Evaluation is conducted periodically and involves various approaches, both quantitative and qualitative, to ensure optimal character development and to allow for continuous and reflective improvement of the program.

The success of the program greatly depends on the commitment of school leaders, the capacity of teachers, and close partnerships with families and the community. Nevertheless, several challenges such as limited facilities, cultural diversity, and low parental support require innovation in strategy and intensive communication. Efforts to strengthen the program can be made through the development of locally-based values programs, the utilization of technology, and collaboration with various external parties to support the sustainability of character education.

With consistent synergy and innovation, character education in vocational high schools in Merauke Regency can produce a young generation that is not only academically excellent but also possesses integrity, responsibility, and adaptability in facing changing times. A positive school culture will be established if all elements unite and take an active role in the ongoing process of character development.

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