Proceedings Series of Educational Studies

The 5th International Conference on Educational Management and Technology (ICEMT) 2026

Implementation Of Human Nature-Based Holistic Education in Student Character Development in Elementary Schools

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Abstract

Elementary school education plays a crucial role in developing students as holistic individuals by integrating individual, social, moral, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual dimensions. This study aimed to describe and analyze the implementation of holistic education based on human nature in developing students' character. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed at Santa Maria Elementary School, Blitar. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews with teachers, and documentation, then analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that holistic education was implemented through four interconnected dimensions of human nature: individuality, sociality, morality, and religiosity. The individual dimension was developed through differentiated learning that accommodated students' abilities, learning styles, talents, interests, and identities. The social dimension was fostered through collaborative learning, positive interactions, and the habituation of living in diversity. Moral development was strengthened through behavioral guidance and socio-emotional mentoring, while the religious dimension was realized through tolerance practices and Religious Holiday programs involving students from diverse religious backgrounds. Teachers served as facilitators, character mentors, and emotional supporters, whereas parents acted as collaborative partners in student development. Overall, the implementation of holistic education promoted independent, tolerant, empathetic, and responsible students while strengthening character through the integration of academic, individual, social, moral, and spiritual development.

Keywords: holistic education; human nature; character education; student development, elementary school.

1. Introduction

Education is essentially a process aimed at optimally developing all human potential. Education is not merely concerned with the transfer of knowledge but also with the responsibility of developing the personality, character, social, moral, emotional, and spiritual abilities of students. Therefore, the implementation of education must be based on a comprehensive understanding of human nature as the primary subject of the educational process. This view aligns with the findings of Ke et al. (2023), who emphasized that 21st-century education needs to develop academic competencies as well as socio-emotional dimensions and character through student-centered learning.

Understanding human nature is a crucial foundation for determining the direction of education. Humans are not merely biological creatures with physical needs, but also as individuals with unique characteristics, social needs, moral values, and a spiritual life. In the context of education, this understanding implies that the learning process must provide space for the development of various dimensions of students' humanity.

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Humans, as individuals, are individuals possessing integrity and uniqueness. Each individual has the potential to develop into their own unique identity, distinguishing them from others. This perspective demonstrates that each student has unique characteristics, abilities, interests, talents, and needs. Therefore, education must respect individual uniqueness and provide each student with the opportunity to develop their potential.

Beyond being individuals, humans are social creatures who need interaction with others. Individual development is inseparable from the social environment in which a person lives and interacts. In the school context, the social dimension develops through interactions between students, teachers, and peers. Discussions, group work, collaboration, and various joint activities can provide opportunities for students to develop communication skills, cooperation, empathy, and respect for others.

Humans also possess a moral dimension related to the ability to understand and consider good and bad values in behavior. Education has a responsibility to help students develop moral awareness so they can make decisions and demonstrate behavior that aligns with the norms of shared life. Developing this dimension is not only achieved through providing knowledge about values, but also requires role models, familiarization, mentoring, and real-life experiences in everyday life.

Another dimension that is part of human nature is religiosity or spirituality. Religiosity can be understood through various dimensions that describe knowledge, belief, and practice of religious values. In the context of education, the development of the religious dimension is not only related to the implementation of religious activities, but can also be realized through the formation of attitudes of mutual respect, tolerance, and the ability to live side by side with individuals who have different beliefs.

These four dimensions demonstrate that student development needs to be understood holistically. Education that is overly focused on academic ability has the potential to neglect other aspects of development. Therefore, a holistic educational approach is needed that views students as whole human beings with various interconnected potentials.

Holistic education provides balanced attention to student development across multiple dimensions. The educational process is aimed not only at producing students with academic abilities, but also at producing individuals who are independent, possess character, are able to interact socially, manage emotions, make decisions based on moral values, and respect diversity (Hasan et al., 2022).

In its implementation, holistic education requires learning that is responsive to individual differences. Each student has different intelligence, learning styles, backgrounds, interests, and potential. Therefore, learning needs to provide space for students to develop according to their characteristics. A uniform approach may not necessarily meet the needs of all students.

Based on observations at the Santa Maria Blitar Elementary School, the application of the concept of human nature is evident in the school's efforts to develop students through the dimensions of individuality, sociality, morality, and religiosity. In the individual dimension, the school views each student as a unique individual with different intelligences, learning styles, and backgrounds. Learning is designed with student needs in mind through differentiation in

planning, learning processes, and outcomes. Teachers also consider students' learning tendencies, such as linguistic, kinesthetic, audiovisual, and visual.

Holistic education is also evident in the school's respect for the diversity of student identities. Despite its distinctive character as a Catholic school, the school does not require non-Catholic students to follow Catholic teachings and provides space for students to maintain their religious identities. This demonstrates an effort to respect individual uniqueness while fostering an inclusive education.

In the social dimension, students are accustomed to living side by side in a multicultural and multireligious environment. Collaborative learning, discussion, group work, and dialogue are used to encourage positive interactions. These activities are aimed at developing students' abilities to understand others' perspectives, develop empathy, adapt, and cooperate in diversity.

The moral dimension is realized through behavioral guidance and mentoring for students experiencing social and emotional challenges. The school strives to create a safe environment for students experiencing social difficulties and provides mentoring gradually. The educational approach is aimed at helping students understand behavior that aligns with values and norms, rather than imposing forced changes.

In the religious dimension, schools foster tolerance through the Religious Holidays (HBG) program. Schools provide space to introduce and appreciate religious celebrations other than Catholicism, such as Chinese New Year, Vesak, and Eid al-Fitr. This program aims to reduce discrimination and build awareness that religious differences are not a barrier to interaction and cooperation.

The implementation of this holistic education cannot be separated from the role of teachers. In today's educational development, teachers are no longer viewed solely as primary sources of knowledge, but also serve as facilitators and mentors. Teachers play a role in character formation, mental and emotional support, and providing care to students. Schools also build partnerships with parents to ensure optimal student development in various aspects of life. Teachers' professional competence, the ability to build positive relationships with students, and reflective learning practices are crucial factors in creating a learning environment that supports the holistic development of students (Wang et al., 2025).

Based on these conditions, the implementation of human nature-based education is interesting to study because it provides an overview of how education can be developed holistically by considering various dimensions of students. This study aims to describe and analyze the implementation of holistic human nature-based education in developing student character in elementary schools, specifically through the dimensions of individuality, sociality, morality, and religiosity, as well as the role of teachers in supporting student development as a whole.

2. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of holistic education based on human nature in the character development of elementary school students. A qualitative approach allows

researchers to understand educational phenomena based on participants' experiences, perspectives, and social contexts, thereby yielding a comprehensive description of ongoing educational practices (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). The study focuses on educational practices related to the development of students' individuality, social skills, morality, and religious values.

The study was conducted at SDK Santa Maria Blitar, located at Jalan Sudanco Supriyadi No. 21, Bendogerit Village, Sananwetan Subdistrict, Blitar City. The school's vision is to cultivate outstanding human resources grounded in Pancasila, environmentally conscious, and imbued with Catholic values. The school's mission includes fostering Christian values, mutual cooperation, critical thinking, creativity, and innovation; preserving culture; developing talents and interests; and promoting environmental awareness.

The research subjects included teachers and students involved in the educational process at the school. Teachers served as the primary informants for gathering information regarding educational approaches, character development, student mentoring, managing diversity, and the role of teachers in student development.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to gain an understanding of the school environment and educational practices that support student development. Interviews were conducted with teachers to gather information on the application of the concept of human nature, approaches to individual differences, social and emotional development, moral education, religious tolerance, and the roles of teachers and parents. Documentation was used as supporting data to reinforce the results of the observations and interviews. The use of various data collection techniques aimed to obtain comprehensive data through triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility of the research findings (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).

The data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the data reduction stage, the data were selected and grouped based on the research focus. The data were categorized into five main themes: the development of the dimensions of individuality, sociality, morality, religiosity, and the role of teachers in holistic education. Next, the data were presented narratively to identify patterns in the implementation of education based on human nature. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on an interpretation of the overall research findings (Kushnir, 2025).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Implementation of Holistic Education Based on the Essence of Humanity

Research findings indicate that the implementation of holistic education at SDK Santa Maria Blitar is based on the understanding that students are human beings with various dimensions of development. Education is not only directed toward improving academic abilities but also toward developing students' character, social skills, moral and spiritual qualities, as well as their mental and emotional well-being. This approach aligns with the evolving 21st-century educational paradigm, which views students as individuals who develop holistically through the integration of cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual aspects (Ke et al., 2023).

This implementation can be analyzed through four dimensions of human nature: individuality, sociality, morality, and religiosity. These four dimensions are not applied separately but are interrelated in various educational activities, thereby forming a holistic learning experience for students. The integration of these various dimensions of development demonstrates that character education is more effective when implemented comprehensively within the school culture rather than through piecemeal instruction (Mu et al., 2026).

This approach indicates that students' character development takes place within various contexts of school life. Independence is related to the development of individuality; empathy and cooperation develop through the social dimension; awareness of good and bad behavior is developed through the moral dimension; and tolerance and respect for differences are developed through the religious dimension. These findings are consistent with research on holistic education, which shows that character formation occurs through the interplay of academic experiences, social interactions, and a school environment that supports students' holistic development (Rusconi et al., 2026).

3.2 Developing the Individual Dimension trough Differentiated Instruction

The research findings indicate that schools view each student as a unique individual. This uniqueness is evident in the differences in intelligence, learning styles, abilities, backgrounds, identities, talents, and interests possessed by each student. This perspective aligns with the concept of student-centered learning, which places the diversity of individual characteristics at the foundation of the learning process (Shi et al., 2025).

Teachers take into account various student tendencies, such as linguistic, kinesthetic, audiovisual, and visual abilities, as well as other potentials. Instruction is designed so that students can learn in accordance with their individual characteristics without losing their sense of self. This strategy demonstrates that differentiated instruction is a form of inclusive education that effectively accommodates the diverse learning needs of students (Wood et al., 2026).

These efforts are implemented through differentiation at the planning, process, and learning outcomes stages. This strategy demonstrates that schools do not view all students as having the same learning styles, but rather provide flexibility according to each student's needs and potential. Research in *Education Sciences* indicates that the implementation of differentiated instruction contributes to increased student engagement, motivation, and competency development because learning becomes more adaptive to individual needs (Anastasiou & Hornby, 2025).

The development of the individuality dimension is also aimed at fostering independent character. Students are guided to recognize their abilities, maintain their identity, and make decisions aligned with their values. This independence is a crucial component of personal competency development that supports lifelong learning success and the ability to navigate increasingly complex social changes (Nissim & Shamma, 2025).

Interestingly, respect for individuality also extends to religious identity. Non-Catholic students are still given the space to maintain their beliefs and are not required to follow Catholic teachings. This demonstrates that individual development is not only related to

academic differences but also to respect for personal identity, cultural diversity, and religious freedom as part of inclusive educational practices (Azizah et al., 2024).

3.3 Developing Social Skills trough Learning in a Diverse Environment

As social beings, humans need the ability to interact and live alongside others. Research findings indicate that the social dimension at SDK Santa Maria Blitar is developed through the practice of living side by side in an environment characterized by cultural and religious diversity. This finding aligns with research confirming that social interactions fostered within the school environment contribute to the development of students' social competencies, empathy, and ability to appreciate diversity (Woodcock et al., 2023).

Students are encouraged to appreciate differences through daily interactions. During pre-class prayer sessions, for example, students participate in group activities but are given the freedom to pray according to their own beliefs. This practice creates a space for togetherness without erasing individual identities and reflects the implementation of inclusive education that respects the diversity of students' beliefs and cultures (Wood et al., 2026).

Collaborative learning is also used to develop the social dimension. Teachers encourage students to engage in discussions, group work, and dialogue so that students gain experience listening to others' opinions, solving problems together, and building effective communication. Research in *Education Sciences* shows that collaborative learning can improve interpersonal skills, mutual respect, and students' ability to work together (Flood & Banks, 2021).

The development of the social dimension contributes to the formation of character traits such as empathy, cooperation, adaptability, and tolerance. Students are not only guided to become academically capable individuals but also to be able to participate in a pluralistic social life. These results reinforce the finding that character education is more effective when students gain real-world experience interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds (Hornby & Kauffman, 2021).

The findings indicate that social character traits cannot be adequately developed simply by teaching about the importance of tolerance or cooperation. These traits require direct experience as students interact, engage in dialogue, and complete various activities together. A learning process focused on social experiences has been shown to have a stronger impact on the internalization of character values than learning that is purely theoretical.

3.4 Developing Moral Values trough Behavioral Guidance

The dimension of morality relates to an individual's ability to understand and apply values considered good and appropriate in communal life. Research findings indicate that schools face a diversity of student behaviors influenced by each student's family background and social experiences. These conditions suggest that moral education must be conducted through an approach that takes into account the developmental context of each student (Evans et al., 2021).

When dealing with students who have difficulty socializing, schools strive to create a safe and comfortable environment. Students are given time, guidance, and opportunities to gradually open up and build communication with their peers. An approach centered on

students' emotional needs has been shown to increase their sense of security, self-confidence, and ability to adapt to the school environment (Hornby, 2021).

The school takes an educational approach to behavioral issues. Students are gradually guided to understand the difference between behavior that conforms to and deviates from norms without resorting to punitive approaches. Research in *Teaching and Teacher Education* indicates that reflective guidance strategies are more effective in fostering moral awareness than punishment alone, as they encourage students to understand the reasons behind certain behaviors (Yada et al., 2022).

This strategy demonstrates that moral education requires a gradual process of internalization. Students are not merely told what is right and wrong, but are also guided to understand the meaning of values, norms, and the consequences of their actions. A continuous process of reflection is a key factor in shaping students' moral character (Kivirand et al., 2021).

A step-by-step approach also allows for the development of students' character. Teachers play a role in helping students reflect on their behavior, make better decisions, and take responsibility for their actions. Thus, moral education does not stop at mastering moral concepts but evolves into tangible behavior applied in daily life.

3.5 Developing Religious Dimensions Trough Education in Tolerance

The research findings indicate that the dimension of religious diversity at SDK Santa Maria Blitar is manifested not only through religious activities but also through education in tolerance that respects the religious diversity of the students. Although the school has a Catholic character, the school environment consists of students from diverse religious backgrounds; thus, the educational process is geared toward fostering mutual respect without eroding each student's religious identity. This finding is consistent with research indicating that multicultural and inclusive education can foster tolerance, respect for diversity, and create a safe learning environment for all students (Wood et al., 2026).

One of the programs implemented by the school is Religious Holidays (HBG). This program provides students with the opportunity to learn about various religious holidays—such as the Lunar New Year, Vesak, and Eid al-Fitr—through simple activities that involve the entire school community. These activities give students a real-life experience that diversity is part of communal life, so that the value of tolerance is not only understood conceptually but also practiced in school life. Research in *Education Sciences* shows that learning experiences that give students the opportunity to interact in diverse environments are more effective in fostering tolerant attitudes than purely theoretical learning (Brigham et al., 2021).

The program aims to foster a sense of equality and reduce potential discrimination among students. Students learn that religious differences do not prevent them from making friends, working together, or participating in various school activities as a group. These results support research findings indicating that schools that foster an inclusive culture are able to enhance mutual trust, respect individual rights, and strengthen social cohesion within the educational environment (Kauffman & Hornby, 2020).

The findings even show that the attitude of tolerance fostered at school carries over into life outside of school. One example observed was students continuing to respect their

classmates who were performing religious rituals while group activities were taking place. This situation indicates that the internalization of religious values has developed into tangible behavior reflected in daily life. This finding aligns with research indicating that character education based on social experiences has a stronger influence on behavior formation than the verbal delivery of material (Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021).

3.6 The Role of Teachers as Facilitators and Mentors in Student Development

The implementation of holistic education requires a change in the teacher's role. Research findings indicate a paradigm shift from the teacher as the primary source of knowledge to the teacher as a facilitator and mentor. This change is influenced by technological advancements that enable students to access information from various sources. Consequently, the teacher's role is increasingly focused on aspects that cannot be fully replaced by technology, particularly character development and mental and emotional support (Shi et al., 2025).

Teachers also serve as providers of care for students who may not have received optimal support in other settings. In the context of holistic education, this care is crucial because academic development is closely linked to students' social and emotional well-being. The teacher's role as a mentor underscores that the educational relationship extends beyond the mere delivery of content. Teachers help students understand themselves, manage their behavior, build social relationships, and develop character values.

Thus, teachers are a key factor in connecting the various dimensions of student development. Through daily interactions, teachers can integrate the development of individuality, social skills, moral awareness, and spiritual values into the educational process.

3.7 Partnership Between Schools and Parents in Holistic Education

Research findings indicate that schools recognize that students' education is not entirely the school's responsibility. The family is still viewed as the first and primary educational environment. Therefore, schools build partnerships with parents to support student development. This synergy is designed to ensure that the guidance provided at school receives support from the family environment.

Partnerships become increasingly important when schools face students' social and emotional challenges. Behaviors exhibited at school may be related to a child's experiences within the family environment. Communication between teachers and parents helps both parties gain a more comprehensive understanding of the student's circumstances (Wilcox et al., 2021). In holistic education, successful character development requires a consistent environment. The values fostered at school need to be reinforced at home so that students have a continuous educational experience.

3.8 Integrating the Dimensions of Human Nature into Character Development

Based on the overall research findings, character development at SDK Santa Maria Blitar takes place through the integration of the dimensions of individuality, sociality, morality, and religiosity. These four dimensions complement one another in shaping students into well-rounded individuals who develop not only academically but also morally, socially, emotionally,

and spiritually. These findings reinforce the concept of holistic education, which views human development as an integrated process in which the various dimensions are inseparable.

The interrelationships among these dimensions are evident in various learning activities and school culture. Appreciation for individual uniqueness fosters the development of self-confidence, while the ability to collaborate requires empathy, moral awareness, and respect for diversity. This integration demonstrates that character development is more effective when all dimensions of human development are nurtured simultaneously within a supportive school environment.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the implementation of holistic education at SDK Santa Maria Blitar has successfully integrated various dimensions of human nature through learning, school culture, the role of teachers, and partnerships with parents. Character education is not carried out through a single specific program but is instead an integral part of the entire learning experience that students undergo every day. These findings reinforce the view that holistic education is a relevant approach for shaping a generation that is of good character, adaptable, tolerant, and capable of coexisting in a diverse society (Rusconi et al., 2026).

4. Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the implementation of holistic education based on human nature at Santa Maria Blitar Elementary School is carried out through the development of individuality, sociality, morality, and religious dimensions. These four dimensions are interrelated in supporting the holistic development of students' character.

The individuality dimension is developed through respect for student uniqueness and the implementation of differentiated learning that considers students' abilities, learning styles, talents, interests, and identities. The social dimension is developed through collaborative learning, discussion, group work, and interaction in diverse environments. The moral dimension is realized through educational behavioral guidance and mentoring for socio-emotional development. Meanwhile, the religious dimension is developed through the practice of tolerance and a program for celebrating Religious Holidays, which provides space for students to recognize and appreciate differences in belief.

The implementation of holistic education is also supported by the role of teachers as facilitators, character mentors, providers of care, and mentors in students' mental and emotional development. Partnerships between the school and parents are crucial for creating a continuous developmental relationship between the school and family.

Thus, education based on human nature can serve as a foundation for developing students' holistic character. Character development is not solely focused on developing specific behaviors, but also encompasses the development of independence, empathy, cooperation, moral awareness, tolerance, appreciation for diversity, and the ability to develop according to their potential and identity.

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