

Character building through non-formal education and parental collaboration in malaysia

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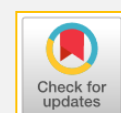
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ABSTRACT

This research deeply examines character building in productive age through non-formal education approach and strategic collaboration between parents and At-Tanzil Guidance Center, Serdang, Malaysia. Productive age is a crucial period in character building, but the lack of solid synergy between parents and non-formal education institutions often becomes an obstacle in achieving transformative results. Through a case study method with interview and observation techniques with parents, learners, and teachers, it was found that the active involvement of parents with programs in Sanggar significantly increased the motivation, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and empathy of learners. This study recommends the development of more innovative programs and the strengthening of sustainable collaboration between families and non-formal education institutions. Various positive activities such as skills training and religious activities have proven to be able to be internalized into children's daily lives, especially when supported by the consistent role of parents at home. The role of parents is proven to be the main pillar in maintaining continuity and strengthening the impact of the education that has been initiated, making it a non-negotiable key factor in the success of character building. The survey results strongly suggest that the role of parents is not just important, but is a vital, strategic, and irreplaceable keyword in sustaining, strengthening, and ensuring the continuity of every educational achievement that has been pioneered in the Guidance Studio at tanzil serdang malaysia. Parental support, whether in the form of active involvement, intense communication with the school, or attention to the development of children's learning at home, is the main foundation for the success of the educational process. Without a strong synergy between schools and parents, all the efforts and educational programs that have been implemented will be difficult to achieve maximum and sustainable results.

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Introduction

Public awareness of personality development at productive age is still uneven, especially among people with lower middle income, such as in rural areas and certain groups of society. Several factors contribute to this situation, including limited access to information, inadequate economic conditions, and the lack of non-formal and formal education programs in the area. In the growing dynamics of globalization, character building is one of the important aspects in shaping individuals who are resilient, have integrity, and have a high work ethic. In Indonesia and around the world, education is recognized as the key to prosperity and a better quality of life (Riyanti Yunisca, n.d.).

Character development is a long-term investment that must start early. Children as the next generation of the nation have tremendous potential and need to be guided to grow into individuals who are noble, knowledgeable, and have adequate life skills (Ali Imron, n.d.). In this case, parents are the first people to meet and interact with their children since birth and play a very important role in building this personality, parents will be the main models and role models that will be imitated by children, besides that non-formal education, especially at productive age, also plays an important role in equipping individuals with the skills needed in the world of work and helping them face various life challenges. By continuing to develop themselves, both intellectually and spiritually, individuals can actively contribute to the development of society and the nation.

Non-formal education is increasingly recognized as an alternative solution for Indonesian children living in Malaysia who face barriers in accessing formal education. At-Tanzil Guidance Studio Serdang, located in Malaysia, has been instrumental in providing learning opportunities for these Indonesian children (Septiwiharti & Mutawakkil, 2023).

Productive age is a time when one is expected to be able to contribute actively in society. However, for Indonesian children growing up in diverse environments, the challenges of reaching their full potential are often greater. Therefore, building a strong personality with the necessary life skills for an uncertain future becomes even more important.

On the other hand, non-formal education is increasingly recognized as a much-needed solution, especially for Indonesian children living abroad, such as in Malaysia. Facing challenges in accessing formal education in the country where they live, non-formal education becomes the main alternative to acquire knowledge and skills. At-Tanzil Guidance Studio Serdang, located in Malaysia, plays a vital role in providing learning opportunities for Indonesian children living abroad. The programs include not only academic knowledge, but also practical skills that are useful in their daily lives (Nurhasanah & Karman, 2025).

Productive age is a time when one is expected to make a significant contribution to society. However, for Indonesian children growing up in a multicultural and challenging environment, the struggle to reach their full potential is often harder. Therefore, building a solid character, equipped with sufficient life skills and mental resilience, becomes even more crucial. In this uncertain world, the ability to adapt and evolve is the key to success. Character building through formal and non-formal education is the foundation that not only forms intellectually superior individuals, but also individuals who are ready to face the challenges of the times and make positive contributions to society.

Method

This research uses a data analysis approach with a case study design to understand the process of character building in productive age through non-formal education and parental collaboration at At-Tanzil Guidance Studio Serdang Selangor Malaysia. Data were

collected through interviews and observations. The research subjects include students and parents as well as the manager of the Guidance Center.

The results revealed that cooperation between parents and non-formal education has a very important role in personality development at productive age. Through non-formal education, learners can strengthen positive moral and personality values. In addition, parental support in the process of personality development contributes significantly to the creation of a learning environment that supports and accelerates the development of children's personality.

Result and Discussion

Building Personality at Productive Age

Personality is a person's distinctive traits and behavior that distinguishes one person from another, and is an integration of structures, behavior patterns, interests, attitudes, abilities and potentials (Syaiful Dinata, n.d.). However, personality is not static. Instead it has a dynamic nature called personality dynamics, which begins to develop rapidly in childhood. Children at that age are still in the developmental phase, so they need guidance and a supportive environment so that their potential can develop optimally. And in essence they still have an immature personality, which is still in the developmental stage (Ade M Irgon & Irawan Setiawan, n.d.).

Personality development ideally starts from the age of 0-6 years, which is in the early childhood education phase (Nahiyah Faraz & Brigitta Tyas Listyaningsih, n.d.). There are two factors that determine personality, namely internal (intrinsic) factors, and external (extrinsic) factors. Internal (intrinsic) factors are innate traits passed down directly by parents, while external (extrinsic) factors arise through interactions between individuals with family, friends, school and society (neighborhood) (Riyanti Yunisca, n.d.). However, personality development is inseparable from various challenges that can hinder it. Social and economic problems, as well as limited access to quality education, often become obstacles in the formation of adaptive and resilient children's character. Therefore, personality should not be an absolute thing, personality can be shaped and realized according to forms that are in accordance with a normal and adaptive personality (Daviq Chairilsyah, n.d.).

Children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia are a vulnerable group who often face various obstacles in the process of forming their personalities. Limited access to formal education, social stigma and economic pressure are the main factors that exacerbate this condition. As a result, many children of migrant workers experience low self-esteem, difficulty interacting with peers, and loss of motivation to learn. This phenomenon not only limits the potential of these children but also raises the possibility of an identity crisis in the future. However, the At-Tanzil Guidance Center in Serdang and other centers organized by the Indonesian Embassy in Malaysia provide a solution to help the children of Indonesian migrant workers overcome these challenges (Sirojuddin et al., 2024).

In this context, the role of non-formal educational institutions such as the At-Tanzil Guidance Center in Serdang is very significant. It functions as a catalyst that can help children of migrant workers overcome these challenges. Through the programs organized, children can gain can improve their skills and knowledge. Not only do they gain new skills and knowledge, but they also receive much-needed emotional and social support. The program provides a space for children to strengthen their self-confidence, build positive social networks, and develop life skills that are relevant to global challenges.

However, despite its obvious benefits, this effort still faces various obstacles. One of them is the lack of consistency in involving parents in the education program. Parents, as the main pillar in the formation of children's personality, should play a more active role in ensuring the sustainability of the education process. In addition, the approaches used in

non-formal education also need to be evaluated to suit the specific needs of children, including adaptation to technological developments and the challenges of the globalization era (Sipahutar et al., 2024).

Thus, the children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia are expected to overcome the various obstacles they face. They have the potential to not only become resilient individuals. They have the potential to not only become resilient individuals, but also to contribute significantly to building their future and that of their communities. As well as being able to overcome the various obstacles they face and achieve success in education and careers in the future. In an era of globalization that is full of uncertainty, investing in the character building of the younger generation is a strategic step that must continue to be prioritized.

Therefore, the role of families, schools and communities is very important in supporting the development of the personalities of children of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. By creating a supportive environment, providing quality education, and instilling positive values, they can develop into individuals who are confident, independent and have a high fighting spirit.

In addition, cooperation between the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia is also a major factor in ensuring the right to education and the welfare of children of migrant workers, because education is one of the human rights and needs that must be fulfilled by the state (derwin, n.d.). The existence of mentoring programs in education and psychosocial support can be a solution in facing various challenges, such as limited access to formal education and the process of cultural adaptation.

With continued attention to character building and improving the quality of their education, children of migrant workers are expected to be able to face challenges, while contributing to creating a better future for themselves and society. In the increasingly fierce global competition, being a strong personality will be an important foundation for them to achieve success and bring positive changes in the future (Suharta et al., 2020).

Non-Formal Education

In essence, non-formal education is education that is carried out outside of school hours, whether tiered or not, continuous or not, which lasts throughout life. One of the differences between formal education and non-formal education is the flexibility in the age of students, the qualifications of educators, learning time, and place of learning (Gaguk Wahyu Puspito, n.d.).

According to Marzuki, non-formal education is any opportunity where there is regular and structured communication outside of school and a person obtains information, knowledge and training or guidance according to his age and life needs with the aim of developing a level of skills, attitudes and values that enable him to become an efficient and effective participant in his family environment and even his community and country (Saleh Marzuki, 2009).

Non-formal education offers a more flexible learning approach than formal education. The curriculum and methods used can be tailored to the needs and interests of learners. Although flexible, the learning process remains structured and deliberate (Albulene Grajcevcic & Arif Shala, n.d.). Non-formal education is not inferior to other education because it has the same role, namely providing the best service to the community (M. N. Kicherova, n.d.). The targets of non-formal education are increasingly diverse, including serving the poor, people who have dropped out and dropped out of formal education and even people who cannot access formal education such as children of people who are migrant workers, the targets of non-formal education continue to expand with the development of science and technology.

Non-formal education is not just an alternative, but an essential need for many individuals who cannot access formal education. With its flexible and adaptive nature, non-formal education becomes a bridge for anyone without age or background restrictions to continue learning and developing according to their needs.

The main advantage of non-formal education lies in its ability to adapt the curriculum and learning methods to the reality of people's lives. Programs such as skills training, courses and literacy or language education not only help individuals improve their abilities, but also open up better economic opportunities. Even with the advancement of technology, non-formal education also plays a role in guiding children so that they do not fall into the unwise use of technology. With non-formal education, their time to play with cellphones is limited, during the day they follow learning activities at school that prohibit the use of cellphones, while at night they can rest or do assignments from school and fill time with activities with parents and family (Suharta et al., 2020).

In addition, non-formal education also helps form habits of discipline and responsibility in the children of migrant workers. They not only gain academic knowledge, but also social skills and moral values that can guide them in their daily lives.

With structured activities, children are more directed in managing their time, so the risk of technology addiction can be minimized. With various activities such as skills, sports, and arts, it can also be a positive alternative to develop their potential.

More than just limiting the use of cell phones, non-formal education plays a role in creating an environment that supports children's overall development, both intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Thus, children of migrant workers can grow into individuals who are more independent, creative, and ready to face challenges in the future.

Unlike formal education, which is more structured and standardized, non-formal education can be more flexible in responding to the needs of learners, especially those from more vulnerable groups, such as children from migrant worker families. Through various programs such as skills training, language courses, literacy education, and life values-based learning, non-formal education can improve the overall capabilities of individuals (Ahmad, 2011).

Non-formal education not only focuses on strengthening academic aspects and practical skills, but also provides greater economic opportunities for its learners. Children are not only equipped with theoretical knowledge, but also skills that can be directly applied in their daily lives, such as sewing, cooking, gardening, or foreign language skills that are increasingly needed in today's world of work.

In the midst of a challenging digital era, non-formal education also plays an important role in guiding children not to fall into technology abuse or excessive use of gadgets. Many children are vulnerable to device addiction due to lack of supervision or engagement in productive activities. Through structured activities, non-formal education helps organize children's time, limiting their use of mobile phones. During the day, they are engaged in learning or training that limits the use of devices, while in the evening they can rest, do schoolwork, or spend quality time with family (Cholifah & Faelasup, 2024).

More than that, non-formal education also contributes greatly to the character building of children. They are taught to be disciplined, responsible, have empathy and care for others. These moral values are instilled consistently through a caring and exemplary approach from the teachers. Children not only develop intellectually, but also in their emotional and social aspects.

With activities such as arts, sports, skills training and religious learning, non-formal education creates an environment that supports holistic child development. Children from migrant worker families, who may not receive full attention in formal education, have the opportunity to grow into independent, creative individuals who are

ready to face the challenges of the future. Non-formal education, with all its benefits, is one of the most important foundations in shaping a resilient and competitive young generation in facing global challenges (Sunarni, 2018).

In non-formal education, there are several activities that can support the development of children's personalities. Some of these activities include:

1. Coloring and drawing

Learners are given pictures to color, they are given the freedom to color according to their imagination. This activity supports the development of children's fine motor skills and stimulates their imagination while introducing colors and shapes (Fajar Fadhilla & Alvi Dyah Rahmawati, n.d.).

Drawing and coloring are fun and beneficial activities for children's development. In addition to training fine motor skills and creativity, this activity can also help build various aspects of a child's personality such as creativity, self-confidence, self-expression, focus and concentration, patience, accuracy and many others.

In addition, through drawing and coloring activities, children also learn to recognize and express their emotions. The colors they choose and the way they stroke their pencils or brushes can reflect their feelings and moods. This helps children to express themselves in a positive and fun way.

Not only that, this activity can also improve children's cognitive abilities, such as understanding between colors, shapes, and patterns. By doing so, they can develop logical thinking skills and creative problem-solving abilities.

Social interaction is also an important part of drawing and coloring activities, especially when done in groups. Children learn to work together, use different color tools, and appreciate each other's work. This can help them build empathy, good communication, and social skills.

With these benefits, drawing and coloring is not just a play activity, but also a valuable learning tool for children's overall development. Therefore, it is important for parents and educators to continue to support and provide space for children to express their creativity through these activities.

2. Watching Educational Movies Together

Educational movies can be an effective alternative start in building students' personalities. Through interesting shows and moral messages delivered creatively, children can learn positive values such as honesty, courage, and mutual help. This educational film watching activity is not only entertaining, but also plays an important role in shaping children's character and behavior from an early age (Padilah & Anggy Widia Ramadanti, n.d.).

Watching Educational Movies can add moral values which moral values here also teach values such as honesty, courage, discipline, hard work, and empathy. Through interesting stories, learners can understand these values and apply them in everyday life. In addition, educational films can help learners understand the concept of life more deeply. With storylines designed to educate, learners can see various life situations and learn how to face life's challenges more positively. And learners can develop empathy by understanding the perspective of the characters in the movie, thus forming good social sensitivity.

Movies can also be a fun learning tool, especially for learners who understand things more easily through audio visuals. In an increasingly modern world, conventional learning methods are often considered less interesting for learners, so educational films can be a solution to teach them various concepts without making them feel burdened.

In addition, educational films also play a role in broadening learners' horizons, through films, they can also get to know various cultures, habits and values from different countries or different social backgrounds. This will help them understand diversity and foster an attitude of tolerance from an early age. With films featuring different professions and fields of study, learners can also begin to recognize their own interests and talents.

However, to ensure maximum benefits, it is important for parents and educators to choose movies that are appropriate for the age and needs of the child. Assistance during viewing is also necessary so that children can understand the message correctly and not misinterpret the information they receive. After watching, discussing the content of the movie can help them connect the story with their daily lives and apply the values they have learned in real life.

With the right approach, educational films can be an effective medium in building students' character and personality. More than just entertainment, films also have great potential to shape a generation that is smarter, empathetic, and has strong moral values.

3. Religious Activities

Religious activities at At-Tanzil Guidance Center in Serdang, such as congregational prayers, joint prayers, and recitation of shalawat, are very important in shaping the character of productive-age children. Apart from providing religious knowledge, these activities also instill noble values such as discipline, responsibility, and social sense. Through congregational prayers, children can develop a strong character, have good morals, and deep spirituality (Neng Zakiyah Zein & Mulyawan Safwandy Nugraha, n.d.).

In religious activities at productive age, such as congregational prayers, prayers together, and recitation of sholawat, it is not only a religious routine, but also a means of moral formation, discipline, and responsibility. With students participating in these activities, students consistently.

More than that, religious activities at productive age are not just a routine or obligation that must be carried out, but also a long-term investment in forming a quality generation, both intellectually and spiritually. Exemplary, habituation, and a supportive environment will strengthen the character building of children into people who are not only academically intelligent, but also emotionally and spiritually mature.

Accustoming children to pray from an early age is a concrete step in building a solid foundation for life. It is not just a matter of teaching the procedures of worship, but also instilling closeness to the Creator, forming a sense of responsibility towards oneself and others, and fostering awareness of the importance of living within the right rules and values. Children who grow up in a positive religious environment will be better prepared to face the challenges of the times with a resilient soul, a soft heart, and a clear mind.

Early prayer habituation is the best investment for a child's future. By familiarizing children with prayer, we not only teach them about religion, but also shape their character into a better person (Muhammad Mutammam Musthofa & Kharisma Nur Pribadi, n.d.).

4. The Art of Dance

Dance, with its beautiful and expressive movements, has a significant role in building a child's personality. Through dance, children can develop various aspects of themselves, whether physical, cognitive, or social-emotional. They learn to control their body movements, enhance their creativity, and learn to work together with others in a team. In addition, through dance practice, children can also hone their memory

skills and increase their self-confidence. Thus, dance is not only a means of entertainment, but also an effective learning tool for children's overall development (Aris Setiawan, n.d.).

On the cognitive side, dance hones children's thinking skills. They learn to memorize sequences of movements, understand patterns, and adjust to the rhythm and tempo. This process indirectly trains memory, focus, and problem-solving skills. Each choreography they learn requires them to think logically, understand structures and process information quickly.

Meanwhile, from the social-emotional aspect, dance is a very effective means to build self-confidence, courage to perform in public, and the ability to work together in teams. In dance rehearsals and performances, children are invited to interact, coordinate and support each other. This creates a sense of community, empathy, and good communication skills from an early age. When children perform on stage and receive appreciation, they will feel inner satisfaction and increased self-esteem, which is very important for their emotional development.

No less important, dance is also a bridge of cultural recognition that is rich in noble values. Through traditional dance, for example, children can recognize the nation's cultural identity, foster a sense of love for the country, and learn to appreciate ancestral heritage. Dance becomes a universal language that can unite differences and foster a sense of tolerance.

Thus, dance not only functions as a medium of entertainment, but also as a comprehensive educational tool. It includes balanced physical, mental, social and emotional development. In an ideal world of education, dance should have a proper place as an integral part of fun and meaningful learning for children. Therefore, integrating dance in early childhood education is a smart step in shaping a generation that is healthy, smart, creative and characterized.

5. Learn a foreign language

Learning foreign languages, such as Arabic and English. It plays an important role in developing character, especially in the context of improving social, cognitive skills and moral values that are valuable in everyday life. Learning a language is not only about the ability to communicate, but also relates to the development of positive character traits, such as respect, discipline, empathy and curiosity.

Learning a foreign language is, in essence, an intellectual and emotional journey. Children and teenagers who learn it will be encouraged to think critically, dare to express ideas, and be more confident in interacting with others, both in the school environment and outside. Good language skills help them express their opinions clearly and politely, as well as being a good listener, two important things in building healthy and productive social relationships (Ratnawati & Sulastri, n.d.).

Cognitively, learning a foreign language can improve memory, hone problem-solving skills, and strengthen focus and flexibility in thinking. Meanwhile, in terms of character building, this activity fosters discipline because it requires continuous practice, develops empathy through understanding the ways of thinking and communicating from other cultures, and fosters great curiosity because each language contains a wealth of cultural values, history, and different points of view.

For example, Arabic is not just a tool to understand the teachings of Islam through sacred texts, but also plays a role in strengthening spiritual, ethical and moral values that shape personality. On the other hand, the ability to speak English opens up vast opportunities to get to know the outside world, facilitate access to global knowledge, foster intercultural communication, and help children keep up with the times more steadily and confidently.

Thus, foreign language learning should not be seen as just part of the academic curriculum. More than that, foreign languages serve as an important tool in shaping strong character, bridging cross-cultural communication, and equipping the younger generation to grow into open, tolerant, and globally minded individuals. However, they must still uphold the values of local wisdom and deep spirituality. In this era of interconnected globalization, the ability to master foreign languages is a fundamental need to produce individuals who are intellectually intelligent, socially mature, and morally strong.

Role of Parents

Parents play a very important role in the process of education and the formation of children's behavior in accordance with the character values that exist in society. After character education is implemented, children interact more with the social environment and are more sensitive to their environment. The success of character education does not only lie in formal education at school, but the educational process in the family is also very influential because children have more time to interact with parents than with teachers or friends at school. A child also cannot understand themselves in expressing their opinions and feelings. This is where the role of parents is very important, namely to provide direction and guidance to their children so that they can have intelligence both in terms of intelligence and emotional direction. As education providers, parents also have a crucial role in shaping their children into educated human beings (Jenita Anjani Br Sembiring, n.d.).

Based on interviews with learners' parents, it was revealed that around 70 per cent of them practiced or applied what they had been taught at school. For example, if at school learners are taught to help each other, then at home they show this attitude by helping their parents with light work. In addition, at school they are also taught to be independent, such as cleaning up after eating or cleaning up the surrounding area. This habit is then reflected at home, where without being asked, they are sensitive to cleanliness by cleaning the dining table after eating and helping their mothers in keeping the house clean. Despite their young age, learners are able to understand and apply the values learned at school. However, out of all the learners, only about 50 percent consistently apply them at home.

This shows that although the results are quite good, there is still room to improve the implementation of character values in daily life. This helps them to become more independent and ready to face future challenges. Thus, the guidance studio makes a great contribution in building a more qualified young generation that is ready to compete in the era of globalization.

Character education plays a very important role in the formation of individuals who have strong moral values and can make a positive contribution to society. One of the parties that significantly influence this character development is parents. They are the first educators for children, and the interactions that occur in the family are often more profound than those that occur in schools. Therefore, character education is not only limited to what is taught at school, but also how parents provide good examples and direction in their daily lives.

Once character education is implemented, children not only gain academic knowledge, but also engage more in social interactions. This makes them more sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and gives them the ability to see the world with a broader perspective. Character education teaches them values such as empathy, tolerance and the importance of contributing to the common good. The impact of implementing character education is huge in shaping a young generation that is able to face life's challenges with full preparedness.

While much character education is provided in schools, the influence of education in the family is even greater. Most of the time children spend at home with their parents,

giving them an enormous opportunity to receive direct instruction from their parents. Parents not only serve as directors who provide guidance and direction, but also as role models who provide real examples of the values they want to teach. The success of character education largely depends on how well parents are able to provide positive role models in their daily lives.

Children, by nature, do not fully understand themselves, especially in expressing their feelings or opinions. In this case, parents have a very important role in providing the support and direction needed. With proper guidance, children will be able to develop their emotional intelligence optimally, learn to manage their feelings well, and understand the feelings of others. This will help them to express themselves in a constructive way, which is very important when they start to become teenagers and face challenges in relationships, academics, or emotional problems.

Parents act not only as educators, but also as partners who help their children achieve their goals in life. They provide a strong foundation for children to understand and internalize important values in life, such as honesty, hard work, responsibility, and a sense of caring for others. In addition, parents are also responsible for ensuring that their children are equipped with the life skills needed to become independent, responsible individuals who are ready to face life's challenges wisely.

The increased implementation of character values in daily life not only helps children become more independent and responsible, but also provides them with social skills that are indispensable in interacting with others in society. Children who receive good character education will be better prepared to face life's challenges, because they have been equipped with the ability to think critically, work together, and have empathy for others. They will be better able to tackle problems wisely and find constructive solutions.

At-Tanzil Guidance Studio Serdang plays an important role in the effort to build a more qualified young generation that is ready to face the challenges of globalization. The educational programs organized at this studio do not only focus on academic aspects, but also include character building and life skills development that children need to thrive in an increasingly complex world. With a holistic approach, where formal and non-formal education complement each other, At-Tanzil Guidance Studio succeeds in creating individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also emotionally and socially mature, ready to become future leaders who can have a positive impact on society.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion above, this study shows that character building at a productive age can be achieved through non-formal education which involves collaboration with the parents of students and the At-Tanzil Guidance Studio in Serdang. The role of parents is very significant in supporting the process of developing the personality of students. Collaboration between non-formal education and parents creates a supportive environment where learners can learn and develop with strong moral values and a positive personality. This research confirms the importance of collaboration between parents and Guidance Centers in building personality at productive age, with cooperation, students can grow into individuals who are independent, responsible and ready to face future challenges and ready to compete in the era of globalization.

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