

Integration of character education based on local culture through online learning in Madras Ahaliyah

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Abstract

The focus of this article's discussion is related to the integration of character education based on local culture at *Madrasah Aliyah* (Senior High School) in Aceh. The participants were determined purposively, and they were six *Madrasah* principals, and 50 teachers served at *Madrasah Aliyah* (Islamic secondary school) throughout Aceh. The data were analyzed following the procedures of qualitative research. The results of the study suggest that the integration of character education based on local Acehese culture was carried out through integration in learning, the preparation of a Characteristic Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) module, the role of the teacher as a role model, and the development of *pesantren* (boarding school) culture. The integration of character education based on local wisdom at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh has implications for student character development, such as religion, integrity, critical thinking, independence, participating in social activities, and responsibility. Furthermore, the implementation of character education in the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic was carried out through a distance-learning system (online). However, the use of this system still faces technical problems, but as a whole, it can be implemented effectively.

Keywords: Character building, Integration, Online Learning, Covid-19

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1. Introduction

Aceh is one of the provinces in Indonesia implementing a special autonomy status in the field of Islamic law. For the people of Aceh, Islamic law has become the fundamental guiding principle of life. Besides, local cultures and wisdom that do not conflict with the Islamic law are also the norms used in the Acehnese people's lives. Moreover, Aceh is known as a region with a unique culture that has attracted the world community's attention in seeking information about Aceh. One of the Acehnese cultures is the culture of "*pu mulia jame*" (culture of honoring guests) through the *Ranup Lampuan* dance, which is one of the traditional dances originating from the Aceh region. This dance is a welcoming dance usually performed by female dancers by presenting a specific kind of traditional food as a welcoming sign. This traditional dance, which is quite famous in Aceh, is often performed to welcome honored guests and other traditional welcoming events. Currently, the *Ranup Lampuan* dance has been integrated into the learning process to strengthen students' character in Aceh.

Culture and Islamic teachings in the context of Acehnese life go hand in hand and are integrated into all social aspects, such as education, politics, and social (Masrizal et al., 2020; Nurdin, 2016). The people of Aceh uphold its culture as the norm of social life, and cultural preservation is carried out optimally through integration in Aceh's education process. Islamic law and culture as local wisdom in Aceh have formed an Acehnese society with integrity and Islamic character, humanist, honesty, togetherness, cooperation, and tolerance.

Local wisdom is a character-building model (Daniah, 2016; Zidniyati, 2018). Therefore, efforts to strengthen the national character of students at *Madrasah Aliyah* (Senior High School) in Aceh are carried out by applying local wisdom that is following the culture and Islamic law in Aceh. The integration of local wisdom in the education curriculum in Aceh aims to produce competent human resources and character according to the Indonesian people's cultural values, especially Aceh (Astutik, 2018; Khumairo & Anam, 2017; Syabuddin et al., 2020).

The application of Islamic education in Aceh is also a form of local wisdom based on the development of the Islamic education system and Islamic education culture in *Madrasah* in Aceh, which refers to the provision of Qanun number 11 of 2014 concerning the implementation of education in Aceh (Sulaiman et al., 2020). The characters developed in students through the integration of local wisdom in the learning process at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh are; (i) noble moral character, (ii) intelligent, (iii) creative, (iv) independent, (v) democratic, and (vi) responsible. This character is in line with the objectives of Islamic education stipulated in the Aceh education Qanun.

The process of strengthening student character based on local wisdom in Aceh has been applied in learning that is in line with the policy of implementing Islamic law in Aceh from 2000 to the present, with the aim of education in Aceh being able to produce students with Islamic character following local wisdom in Aceh (Selasih & Sudarsana, 2018; Susiloningtyas et al., 2017). Furthermore, the application of the Islamic cultural education and management system and the integration of local wisdom in the learning process also aims to develop students' character at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh (Oktari et al., 2015).

Based on the data and information obtained, the integration of character education based on local wisdom in the learning process at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh has been effective and has given birth to many graduates who are Islamic, honest, creative, hard work, and democratic, and have served the nation and society by success. Furthermore, based on preliminary research data, information was also obtained that generally, students studying at the *Madrasah Aliyah* education unit in Aceh have Islamic characteristics. However, this information is different from the current reality. The integration of character education based on local wisdom in the learning process at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh has not been able to develop Islamic character in students effectively. It is

so stated because it refers to several indicators; many students display disrespectful behavior, disrespect among their peers, sit in a coffee shop during study hours, less obedient to teachers, and angry when reminded by the teachers. New problems related to student character were found during the online learning process that was enforced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many students were not focused, and sometimes students played games during the learning process. This is in line with the teacher's data that there was a change in the character of students during the distance-learning (online) process during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the implementation of character education at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh is less effective through online learning. Based on the problems mentioned earlier, researchers are interested in conducting more in-depth research to find more accurate information about the integration of character education based on local wisdom during online learning at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh.

2. Method

This is a qualitative research methods, since it aims at understanding ones' feeling and experience (Moleong, 2019). This method is used to examine the condition of natural objects and researchers as a critical instrument. Data collection was carried out through interview and observation; there was data triangulation, qualitative-inductive data analysis, and qualitative research results emphasized meaning rather than generalization (Creswell, 2018; Sugiyono, 2016). This research was conducted at *Madrasah Aliyah* in the Aceh province. The participants of the research participants were six principals of *Madrasah Aliyah* and 50 teachers. Data collection uses several techniques; interviews, observation, and document analysis. Data analysis was carried out following the qualitative research procedure (Moleong, 2019).

Interviews were conducted with *Madrasah Aliyah* principals and teachers to obtain research data on the integration of character education in the learning process in predicting Islamic character culture. This research emphasizes making teachers role models in implementing the character values of local wisdom in accordance with the application of Islamic shari'a in Aceh. Although now being hit by Covid-19 all over the world, the implementation stage of character education based on local wisdom is delivered online practiced by teachers in the learning process in *Madrasah Aliyah*.

In line with that, researchers observed aspects of the implementation of character values in accordance with local wisdom in Aceh and the process of implementing online-based character education during the Covid-19 period. In addition, we also analyzed lesson plan documents used by teachers as a guide to the teaching and learning process.

3. ResultsAnd Discussion

3.1. Integration of Character Education in the Learning Process

Education is a process of fostering the mastery of knowledge, technology, skills, arts, and morals (character) to increase human competitiveness as individuals and contribute to the empowerment of local communities, the nation, and the global community (Suranto Aw, 2014). Character is defined as the constellation of values, beliefs, and institutions unique to a given group of people (Savage, T. V., & Armstrong, 1996). Therefore, ideally, every community participates actively to preserve the nation's character's value and is integrated into the school education process (Lickona, 1991).

The implementation of character education in Indonesia refers to Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system; article 3 stipulates that national education functions develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a nation with dignity in the context of educating the nation's life, as well as, aiming at developing the potential of students. To become human beings who believe and fear the Almighty God, noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. Character

education aims to shape a person's personality through character. The results can be seen in one's real actions, namely good behavior, being honest, responsible, respecting others' rights, hard work, and so on (Eko et al., 2020; Gunawan, 2017). Substantial character is essential in education to support and shape students who are virtuous and moral. Education is not just a transfer of knowledge. However, the formation of student morale and character must be the main focus to produce a generation of Indonesians with a character under the nation's ancestors' ideals.

The implementation of character education at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh is carried out in an integrated manner in all subjects and accordance with the applicable curriculum. This is following research data obtained from the head of *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh, which states that *Madrasah* education units have the responsibility to produce a generation of the nation with character, especially in Aceh. The character implementation strategy is carried out through integration in the learning process. This information is also strengthened by the teacher's statement confirming that the implementation of character education is integrated into learning in all subjects that have been stipulated in the *Madrasah Aliyah* curriculum in Aceh. Thus, character education is not carried out separately but is integrated into learning (Berkowitz & Simmons, 2003; Sukestiyarno et al., 2019).

The integration of character education in learning at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh province is expected to have positive implications for students' good character and morals as the younger generation of the Indonesian nation (Muhammad AR, 2019). For this reason, the head of *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh emphasized that all teachers in charge are required to have the skills to integrate national character in the learning process, and teachers must compile a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) module that contains character values.

Madrasah's head supervises the module's lesson plan (RPP) and the implementation of learning by the teacher. The aim is to ensure that the lesson plan created by the teacher is character-based. Besides, the lesson plan also serves as a teaching guide. Therefore, the character to be achieved in learning must be written in the lesson plan. The national character values that are integrated into the learning implementation plan module by those determined by the Ministry of National Education include; religious, honest, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democratic, curiosity, national spirit, love for the motherland, respect for achievement, friendly/communicative, peace-loving, fond of reading, social care, social care, and responsible answered (Wati& Mariatun, 2019).

Based on the teacher's information, as a whole, the character education process at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh is carried out through an integrated approach in the learning process. Character is not a form of subjects given to students separately, but the character is taught in an integrated manner and is not separate from subjects and the curriculum. Also, teachers are expected to influence behavior patterns and creativity in students' thinking as one of the lively characters they have (Kim et al., 2019). Schools train students to think critically through the learning process to form individuals with critical character so that they cannot be easily affected by negative things.

Furthermore, efforts to develop the character of togetherness in students are carried out using cooperative learning models. Through this learning model, students are trained to work in teams and have a sense of responsibility. This is in line with the data collected from teachers who state that the cooperative learning model's application is very supportive and has positive implications for strengthening the character or attitude of togetherness, with indicators of students helping each other to help and cooperate effectively in the learning process. This character is expected to stick with every student and can be practiced in everyday life. The following describes the flow of character education integration at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh.

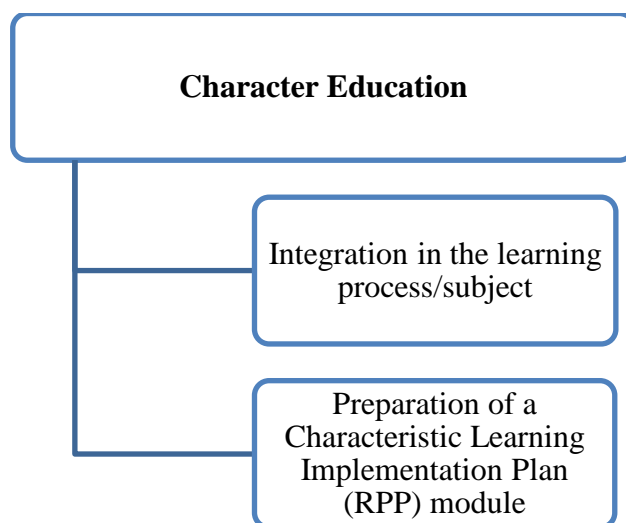


Figure 1. Hierarchy of Character Education Implementation

The Hierarchy of Character Education Implementation is simply designed based on the data obtained from the research object. The basis of the hierarchy explains the flow of character education implementation carried out at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh, namely through the use of an integrated approach in the learning/subject process, furthermore it is also equipped with a characterized Learning Implementation Planning (RPP) module.

3.2. Integration of Character Education in Islamic *Madrasah* Culture

The implementation of character education is also carried out by integrating the Islamic boarding school culture in Aceh. The development of a conducive *pesantren* atmosphere aims to create a positive environment in order to be able to shape student behavior that is humanist, friendly, courteous and has a good personality under the implementation of character education programs (Sulaiman, 2017b; Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020). Positive cultural diversity can also be applied to *Madrasah* to support character education (Selamat et al, 2020).

Islamic *Madrasah* culture is a form of a particular policy on education in Aceh to strengthen student character. Based on the research data obtained, this culture is called the 3Sgreet (*salam*), hail (*sapa*) and smile (*senyum*). Teachers and students get used to this culture at every opportunity, both inside and outside the classroom. The head of *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh also provided information that to support the implementation of character education at *Madrasahs*, a daily picket schedule for teachers was implemented. Among the picket duties, the teacher is standing at the gate waiting for the arrival of students and the teacher giving smiles and greetings to every student who comes. The program aims to create familiarity and develop positive character in students.

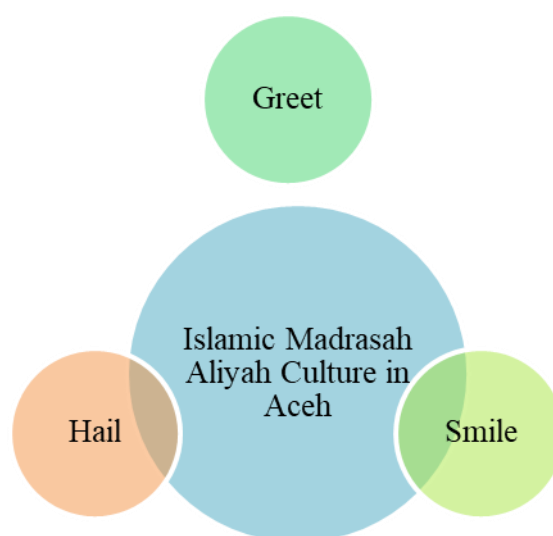


Figure 2. Islamic Madrasah Culture

The culture of Islamic *Madrasah Aliyah* can create a conducive learning situation and is very much needed in the character education process. The research data shows that a conducive learning situation has implications for the positive character of students. The character values that grow in students are as follows: (1) Peace-loving character. (2) Mutual respect character, (3) Tolerance character, (4) The character of shared responsibility.

A conducive *Madrasah* environment is an influential culture that must be developed by madrasah. The aim is to shape students' awareness and character to not engage in prohibited behavior because they already have lively characters as a basis for behavior. Therefore, the *Madrasah Aliyah* education unit in Aceh is expected to develop Islamic culture to create a conducive and characteristic *Madrasah* environment.

3.3. Teacher as a Role Model

Teachers are at the forefront of the character education process (Lunenberg et al., 2007; San-Martín et al., 2019; Selasih & Sudarsana, 2018). Teachers have a dual role in education, namely, educators who transfer knowledge and act as role models (*uswatun hasanah*) for students. Teachers, as role models, are expected to inspire and motivate students to behave and have character. Teachers' role is very influential in student education (Xu et al., 2020), including in character education for students.

Research data obtained through interviews with teachers at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh show that the teacher has tried optimally to act as a good role model for students to strengthen student character. Furthermore, it is also emphasized that role models are a good culture and must be displayed by the teacher to stimulate students to become individuals with character. This data is by the data obtained from the head of *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh that mentioned all the teacher has played as a role model by communicating politely, not smoking in the Madrasah, and displaying a polite attitude both in the learning process in class or when interacting with fellow teachers.

The teacher as a character role model has several indicators of social and personal character, which can be manifested in the form; (a) a teacher must be intelligent and insightful, (b) a teacher must continue to improve his knowledge, (c) a teacher must believe in the validity and benefits of the lessons delivered, (d) a teacher must be objective in solving problems, (e) teachers must have exemplary dedication, motivation, and loyalty, (f) a teacher must be responsible for the quality and moral personality, (g) a teacher must be able to improve student behavior, (h) a teacher must

distance himself from appreciation and praise, (i) a teacher must be able to actualize the subject matter that has been presented, and (j) a teacher must have many initiatives or initiatives that are following technological developments (Ishak, 2019). Furthermore, teachers must follow technological developments (Farjon et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in the perspective of the Islamic philosopher, Al-Ghazali on (Sulaiman, 2017a), explained that a teacher must possess six essential characteristics as an educator, namely:(1) Trust and work diligently; (2)Gentle and affectionate towards learners; (3) Be able to understand and be dilated in science and to the people who are taught; (4) Not greedy on the material; (5) Knowledgeable; and (6) *Istiqamah* (commitment) and uphold the principle (Islam).

Al-Gazali on (Sulaiman, 2017a), also added that several essential characteristics must be developed in students, namely: (1) humility, (2) purifying oneself from all badness, and (3) being obedient and *istiqamah*. Therefore, teachers have a significant influence on students' character development, and teachers who serve at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh as a whole can be said to have been advised as role models for students.

Teachers in the context of implementing character education at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh already reflect some role models. The role of the teacher as a role model has become part of Islamic culture in Aceh so that in practice, teachers are accustomed to acting as character role models. Meanwhile, students in Aceh have great respect for their teachers; this is an integral part of character education. Therefore, the professionalism of teachers in moral value and character education supports the success of character education in *Madrasah* (Haji Musa & Mohd Yusoff, 2019). Thus, teachers are expected to develop professional competence to support the implementation of character education in *Madrasah*.

3.4. Integration of Acehnese Local Wisdom Characters in Learning

Aceh is one of the provinces in Indonesia with a special autonomy status based on Law Number 18 of 2001. The basis of this law makes Aceh province have its authority in determining policies, especially regarding the implementation of Islamic law and education. Meanwhile, the implementation of character education based on Aceh's local culture is stipulated based on Aceh Qanun Number 11 of 2014 concerning the Implementation of Education and Qanun Number 9 of 2015 concerning Amendments to Aceh Qanun Number 11 of 2014 concerning the Implementation of Education(Masrizal, 2015; Muhammad et al., 2020) The function of administering Aceh education is part of the effort to develop all aspects of students' personality in the context of realizing a civilized and dignified Acehnese society.

This policy confirms that the Aceh government has the authority and responsibility for implementing Islamic education at all levels of the education unit in Aceh, including at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh. Islamic education is education under the teachings of religion and culture in Aceh. This is as stipulated in the Aceh Qanun Number 11 of 2014, Article 1 Verse 21, that Islamic education is education based on Islamic teachings' values.Based on teachers' data, the integration of character education is carried out following the applicable policies in Aceh related to the implementation of Islamic law and local wisdom in Aceh.

The development of religious character in students is carried out by reading the Al-Qur'an program on every Friday before the learning process begins. This program has implications for the character of religious students and the development of individuals with honest and responsible character. This information is in accordance with research data compiled from the head of *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh that there are several local cultures included in local wisdom in Aceh that is integrated into educational programs at Madrasahs to strengthen student character, among others; Duha sunnah prayer in the morning in the congregation, and obligatory zuhr prayer in the congregation

every school day. Implementation of congregational prayer at *Madrasah* has implications for students' religious students' character responsibility, honesty, and discipline.

Character education is also integrated through extracurricular proby Ranup Lampuan dance, one of the local cultures and wisdom in Aceh. This dance is prevalent in Aceh and even in the world today. The integration of this dance in the extracurricular program at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh aims to develop the character and identity of Aceh in students and, at the same time, preserve Acehnese culture. The aim of integrating Acehnese local wisdom in the education process at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh is in line with the objectives of implementing Islamic education based on Aceh Qanun No.11 of 2014 Article 4, which stipulates that the implementation of education in Aceh aims to develop all the potential of students into human beings who: (a) Have faith and devotion to Allah SWT. (b) Noble character. (c) Be knowledgeable. (d) Intelligent. (e) Competent. (f) Creative. (g) Independent. (h) Democratic, and (i) To be responsible.

The implementation of Islamic education in Aceh and the integration of character education based on Aceh's local culture, primarily at *Madrasah Aliyah*, have been carried out effectively. All *Madrasah Aliyah* education units in Aceh have implemented an education process based on policies stipulated by the Aceh government and based on Acehnese local wisdom to develop student character that is relevant to the Acehnese culture, which is polite, integrity, honest, and hardworking (Sulaiman et al., 2020).

Acehnese local culture-based character education also contributes to constructing a more Islamic student mental revolution; integrity, work ethic, and togetherness (Saifullah et al., 2020). Therefore, the character education program at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh is part of the national education system program implemented with a particular model concerning the special autonomy policy in Aceh. This is Aceh's local wisdom, which is different from other regions in Indonesia and even countries in the world.

3.5. Character Education Based on Online Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Aceh

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed all social and educational structures. The education process had changed completely if before the implementation of education took place face-to-face in class; currently, in Indonesia, it is implementing a distance learning system (online) using the internet. This policy is an effort to break the chain of transmission of the coronavirus. Several teachers had implemented online learning at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh before the Covid-19 pandemic and implemented social distancing and distance learning by the government. However, the term online learning is getting more and more popular after social distancing. Online learning that is applied is more likely to be in the form of assignments via applications. Students are given assignments to complete, then corrected by the teacher as a form of assessment, and given comments as a form of evaluation (Syarifudin, 2020).

The character education strategy carried out by *Madrasah Aliyah* teachers in Aceh during the Covid-19 pandemic was through a distance learning system using the internet (Hidayati & Endayani, 2019). Acehnese character values and local wisdom are integrated through an online learning system. However, some teachers argued that online character education was less useful because it did not deal directly with students. Other factors that also become obstacles, including; limited internet services and weak networks, teacher instructions that are not understood by students, and online learning using a zoom application that causes wasteful internet quota (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020).

The head of *Madrasah Aliyah* confirmed this information in Aceh that the learning process is currently taking place using an online system. Generally, teachers are familiar with the internet and have adequate skills. Distance learning using the internet is a very available alternative and the most likely to be used during the Covid-19 pandemic. Even though learning uses online, fostering student

character is one of the focuses that needs more attention. This means that online learning not only prioritizes aspects of knowledge, but character aspects are also essential to students. The teacher's strategy is the integration of Acehese character values and local wisdom through the online learning process.

Character education is one of the essential aspects developed for students studying at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh during the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers and principals work hard to foster student character through curriculum, extracurricular, and self-development programs to develop student character. The character of togetherness and mutual assistance is developed in students to arouse a sense of concern for the community affected by Covid-19 so that students are willing to participate in helping through social programs in Madrasah. The use of an online learning system has positive implications for the development of independent, responsible, and honest character for *Madrasah Aliyah* students in Aceh because distance learning through an online system trains students to learn independently without a teacher. Likewise, for several other characters, such as honesty and discipline. Students are trained to learn focus and discipline to submit assignments on time. Therefore, this character has implications for the personality of students and can be practiced in everyday life.

The advantage of online learning is a form of learning that can make students work independently without expecting help from others (Syarifudin, 2020). The use of online systems at this time is generally used in schools to support the implementation of learning (Trung et al., 2020). Besides, online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was effectively used to apply physical distancing and maintain the quality of learning (Littenberg-Tobias & Reich, 2020; Viner et al., 2020). This also applies as online learning is used in the learning process at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh to improve the quality of learning and the application of student character education.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The implementation of education in Aceh is carried out in an Islamic manner and based on Acehese culture as local wisdom, which refers to the stipulation of Aceh Qanun No.11 of 2014 concerning the Implementation of Aceh Education. Meanwhile, the strategy for implementing character education at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh is carried out through integration in the learning process, compiling a Characteristic Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) module, Islamic *Madrasah* culture by accustoming to the 3S culture *salam* (greet), *sapa* (hail), and *senyum* (smile) in the *Madrasah* environment, the presence of teachers as character role models at Madrasah, and integration of Acehese local wisdom in learning in the form of a program reading the Al-Qur'an regularly on Fridays and congregational prayers for the development of students' religious character.

The implementation of character education at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh during the Covid-19 pandemic was carried out using a distance learning strategy (online), which was internet-based. The integration of character education based on Acehese local culture has implications for students' character, in the form of; religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hardworking, creative, independent, democratic, curiosity, national spirit peace-loving, social care, and responsibility. It is recommended that the integrated model of character education at *Madrasah Aliyah* in Aceh is expected to become a best practice to be applied to other schools in Indonesia and educational institutions in other countries.

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