



Curriculum and Cultural Value Transformation in Preparing Intelligent and Character-Building Students

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Abstract. This research discusses the curriculum and cultural values transformation in order to generate intelligent students who have character integrity and are ready to become the greatest generation of the future. In order to create a golden generation in the future, education requires a curriculum as a guide for implementing various learning activities. Indonesia is experiencing many curriculum changes where every teacher must become an adaptive individual to implement the curriculum based on existing references. Cultural values transformation and creating students with the finest character is the main objective of curriculum implementation in Indonesia. Appropriate regulations are needed so that this top purpose can be achieved properly. Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 12 of 2024 is the latest regulation which contains procedures for implementing Kurikulum Merdeka (the Independent Curriculum) as the newest curriculum in Indonesia. This article discusses explicitly the regulations in the ministerial regulations and how curriculum management becomes a reference as a basis for developing learning activities to create intelligent students who have character integrity. Keyword: Curriculum, Cultural Value, Character-Building

1 Introduction

The curriculum is a crucial element in the implementation of learning across all educational levels [1], [2]. It guides education towards achieving the desired objectives. In educational settings, the term curriculum is interpreted in various ways by different experts. However, it generally refers to the set of rules and procedures that regulate learning activities within educational institutions to achieve predefined goals. According to the National Education System Law No. 23 of 2024, “A curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, learning materials, and methods that serve as a guide for organizing educational activities to achieve specific educational goals.”

The curriculum plays a vital role in improving the quality of education since its functions are closely tied to the objectives and direction of learning, the student's learning experience, and how these experiences are organized into new understanding. The functions of a curriculum encompass several roles: the conservative role, the creative role, and the critical and evaluative role [3]. The conservative role is related to

the curriculum function which includes mindfulness and the content of the past about the present. This places the curriculum as an element that is interconnected with the past within the context of education. The Creative role refers to a curriculum that should be able to cultivate new developments to current societal demands and emerging trends for the future [4].

Furthermore, a critical and evaluative role is needed where the curriculum has the task and responsibility to encourage students who have strong reasoning skills, aware of the surroundings, and are also able to make valuable decisions that are result-oriented for progress. The curriculum is prepared and developed to achieve national education goals. Thus, the curriculum is a crucial component in the education system, because it not only concerns the objective and direction of education, but also the learning experiences that each student must have, and how to organize the experience itself. The curriculum is a tool or model used by each institution to achieve educational goals.

The curriculum is inherently dynamic, frequently changing to adapt to the shifting trends in society. These changes accommodate current needs as well as the future demands of the community. Curriculum modification in education are a routine agenda aimed at improving the quality of education in developing countries. The operational curriculum of Indonesian education must be dynamic and constantly evolving with the advancements in society. However, despite the regularity of curriculum changes, many tendencies hinder their effectiveness. This ineffectiveness is linked to teachers' inability to develop the existing curriculum. On the other hand, an important aspect that needs to be effectively considered in terms of teacher involvement in curriculum development is that teachers should be encouraged in the curriculum development process [5]. This emphasizes the importance of curriculum adaptation, which will subsequently influence changes in cultural values related to students' character and boost their intelligence across various areas, including affective, cognitive, and psychomotor aspects.

There are several issues related to the curriculum and changes in cultural values. One of the challenges is that many teachers struggle to adapt to changes in the curriculum. Each time a new curriculum is implemented, many concerns hinder teachers' understanding and ability to learn and adapt. Another issue is that when a new curriculum is introduced, students and their parents often become confused by the constant changes, this requires more time to comprehend. Lastly, character education is one of the main products of the curriculum. However, in practice, fostering good character in students is complex, as character development requires an extensive process. Additionally, the parenting style and the surrounding environment also influence the application of the good character values promoted in the curriculum.

2 METHOD

The underlying methods of this article utilize observational research conducted in schools, through examining and surveying teacher's perspectives, student character, school programs, and more questions regarding the curriculum. This article uses a

method that involves written questions for teachers and school principals, who will complete a questionnaire sent to them to answer several written questions regarding their perspectives on the curriculum and changes in cultural values.

3 Results And Discussion

Curriculum in Indonesia

Education is a subject characterized by dynamism, involving many factors and always undergoing processes. As a dynamic subject, various changes, evaluations, and improvements are essential in the journey of a curriculum within a country. The process and outcomes of education within a curriculum are determined by the existence of changes and evaluations to create a more valid and proficient curriculum implementation concept. Curriculum design does not happen in a vacuum. While existing orientations play an important role, (explicated) design reasoning is also influenced by the priorities of stakeholders other than the teachers themselves [6]. Among all of the important aspects of curriculum implementation, each country requires adaptable teachers to navigate various curriculum changes and their implementation.

In Indonesia, during the Dutch and Japanese colonization, the implementation of school curricula was marked by colonial missions. The educational goal during that period was to produce human resources that could assist in achieving various colonial objectives. However, over time, education in Indonesia has evolved following the proclamation of independence. The history of curriculum development in Indonesia spans from the pre-independence era to the present, where education during the pre-independence period was influenced by colonialism, training Indonesians to serve the colonizers.

Indonesia has undergone a series of changes that have shaped its curriculum journey, the latest being the launch of the Kurikulum Merdeka policy by the government, aimed at addressing the ongoing learning crisis in Indonesia, which has not improved over the years, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic that heightened learning losses and increased educational disparities.

Merdeka Belajar is a new policy program by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture of the Advanced Indonesia Cabinet. Nadiem states that learning occurs through the translation of basic competencies and existing curricula. The Merdeka Curriculum fosters a comfortable learning atmosphere, allowing students to engage more in discussions with teachers rather than merely listening to explanations, while also nurturing students' personalities to be brave, independent, socially intelligent, courteous, and respectful, as well as developing each child's unique talents and intelligence in their respective fields. The Merdeka Belajar concept proposed by Nadiem Makarim is driven by the desire to create a joyful learning environment without the burden of achieving specific scores or grades [7].

From the discussion above, it is evident that Indonesia has experienced several curriculum changes, adapting to the nature of the times, the dynamics emerging in society, contemporary needs, and various interests that must be considered.

"Kurikulum Merdeka" as the Latest Curriculum in Indonesia and Its Implementation

Essentially, every curriculum implemented in Indonesia emphasizes the importance of character development over the goal of achieving the highest cognitive scores. This focus on character-building has been explicitly emphasized, both implicitly and explicitly, in the last two curricula, namely the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum emerged as an improvement upon the previous curriculum.

The Kurikulum Merdeka is designed around New Paradigm Learning principles. Five guiding principles are central to this model: a) learning that considers students' developmental stages and achievement levels; b) fostering students' capacity as lifelong learners; c) holistically developing students' competence and character; d) contextual and relevant learning that incorporates students' environments and cultures, engaging parents and the community as partners; e) learning that is future-oriented and sustainable [8].

The Merdeka Curriculum is implemented with the principles of New Paradigm learning. Five principles need to be pursued in learning the New Paradigm of the Merdeka Curriculum, including a) Learning by considering the stages of development and level of achievement of students, b) Learning is carried out to build the capacity of students to become lifelong learners; c) The learning process supports the development of competence and character of students holistically; d) Relevant learning, namely learning that is designed according to the context, environment and culture of students, and involves parents and the community as partners; and e) Sustainable future-oriented learning [8].

The Kurikulum Merdeka includes projects aimed at empowering the "Pancasila Student Profile," a concept for character development. The main goal of this curriculum is to shape a generation with a strong Pancasila character, embodied in six main traits. The freedom to learn, while considering student's learning styles, is central to this curriculum. Students are encouraged to explore their interests and abilities freely, without being forced to study subjects they dislike. Through this curriculum, students can place and develop their interests and talents, which helps them understand learning materials across various intramural subjects and engage in character education-based learning through projects designed to strengthen the Pancasila Student Profile.

Character Development in the Kurikulum Merdeka

The ever-changing and evolving progress of globalization undoubtedly demands a highly skilled and well-informed human resource base, equipped with general scientific

knowledge and strong moral values to resist negative cultural influences. The crises encountered by Indonesia extend beyond material issues but have penetrated the ethical and religious spheres as well. This is due to weak religious education, non-conducive societal environments, and inadequate family and school surroundings. Additionally, the progress of the times has made society increasingly complex. Therefore, appropriate steps must be taken to realize quality education, aimed at elevating the overall standard of education.

Character education is not a process of memorizing exam content, but requires conditioning. The habit of good deed, the habit of being honest, feeling ashamed of cheating, to being lazy, or to allow one's environment to remain unclean and other commendable behaviors. Character is not developed instantly, but must be trained seriously. Developing a curriculum that touches on the affective domain is one of the best ways to develop character in students.

Pancasila as the main guideline and source in building the Indonesian nation must receive serious attention in the modern era like today because the developing global dynamics can facilitate the shifting of noble and basic values that can damage the foundation of the nation as a whole [9]. Pancasila remains the primary foundation for character development in the Indonesian curriculum, given its role as the nation's guiding philosophy. Pancasila encompasses a broad range of values that shape citizens into quality individuals. Educators should design classroom activities that consistently integrate character education or embody the values of the Pancasila student profile. To build character within the classroom, a school culture that supports students in habitual character-building processes must be established.

The education of national character is an essential element of societal, national, and state life. Therefore, the education and character implementation of Pancasila values should contribute to strengthening character education [10]. Character education, as developed in the Merdeka curriculum, aims to cultivate students with a strong Pancasila character. The guiding principle of where we are headed in terms of educational goals is referred to as the Pancasila Student Profile. It is important to first understand this direction to determine what educators want from their students once they graduate, namely to produce highly capable human resources. A student is considered exceptional when they embody lifelong learning, possess global competencies, and behave according to Pancasila values. The Pancasila Student Profile, as developed in the Merdeka curriculum, includes faith and devotion to God Almighty, noble character, global diversity, collaboration, independence, creativity, and critical thinking.

Teachers are the key figures in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in schools. In the context of this study, the focus is on elementary school teachers. Therefore, this study aims to further explore how teachers perceive the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in elementary schools [11], [12]. Educators are capable of designing classroom activities that integrate character education or incorporate Pancasila student profile values. To facilitate character development in the classroom, a school culture that encourages students to engage in character-building processes must be fostered.

In the Merdeka curriculum, character development through the Pancasila Student Profile is implemented across several dimensions: curricular activities, extracurricular activities, school culture, and the Pancasila Student Profile reinforcement projects, which differentiate this curriculum from previous ones [13]. In these projects, students engage in activities aimed at building the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile: faith and devotion to God Almighty, global diversity, independence, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. These six dimensions are cultivated through curricular, co-curricular, school culture, and Pancasila Student Profile reinforcement projects.

With optimal efforts to develop students' character through these Pancasila Student Profile projects, it is hoped that the ultimate goal of instilling positive character and value transformation in students will be achieved.

Implementation of Permendikbud No. 12 of 2024 and Its Impact on Curriculum Development

The implementation of educational programs in Indonesia has undergone numerous transformations due to new regulations and policies issued by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Mendikbudristek), Nadiem Makarim. The latest policy is outlined in Ministerial Regulation No. 12 of 2024, regarding the Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education.

This regulation outlines three types of learning activities: intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular. It also consists of curriculum goals to guide teaching activities, the curriculum structure, and subject content [14]. The updated regulation largely focuses on reinforcing and solidifying existing rules, making only a few revisions to sections considered outdated or misaligned with the current needs of the education system.

There are a few notable updates in this regulation, one of which is the change regarding extracurricular activities in schools as stated in Article 34 (Pasal 34), Chapter V, Closing Provisions of Ministerial Regulation No. 12 of 2024, "At the time this Ministerial Regulation takes effect, Article 63 of 2014 concerning Mandatory Scout Education as an Extracurricular Activity in Primary and Secondary Education is repealed and declared invalid." This new provision eliminates the compulsory status of scouting activities that had been mandatory for students at the primary and secondary education levels since 2014. This regulation refines previous guidelines by strengthening existing rules and revising sections that are no longer aligned with the current educational needs. Among these updates is a significant change regarding extracurricular activities in schools. This regulation appears to be the latest rule that revokes the previous regulation, Number 63 of 2014, which required all students in primary and secondary education to participate in Scouting as a mandatory extracurricular activity. This change is particularly significant, as the primary aim of the curriculum reform is to foster character and cultural development while scouting, with its strong focus on character-

building aspects, has been an effective activity for supporting students' character growth due to its strong emphasis on character-building values.

Based on the regulations in Ministerial Regulation No. 12 of 2024, each educational institution must be more discerning in assessing the characteristics, needs, and conditions of both the institution and its students to implement the Kurikulum Merdeka effectively, ensuring improvements in students' cultural values and character.

Changes in Cultural Values Due to Curriculum Modifications

Education and the process of cultural transmission are crucial elements of civilized human life. Culture is shaped by numerous forms of knowledge that are considered essential for sustaining life. It represents the values shared by a society, influencing behavior. These values or ideas are passed down through generations utilizing education.

Modifications in the curriculum can have both positive and negative effects on the quality of education. On the positive side, students can adapt to the rapid advancement of the times. However, frequent curriculum changes can lead to new concerns, such as teachers struggling to adapt and student's declining performance due to difficulties in adjusting to new learning systems.

These changes in the curriculum contribute to shaping the character of a nation. In an era where the moral and ethical standards of youth are deteriorating, a curriculum focused on character development becomes essential. Curriculum improvement is an integral part of the curriculum itself, requiring continuous updates to meet students' evolving needs [15]. Character education has been a focus for many years, but with changing times, there is a need to reintegrate these values into educational activities to counteract their gradual decline.

The curriculum is designed to lead education toward better outcomes. Significant curriculum changes can have a profound effect on cultural values. When educators are committed to enhancing character development within the curriculum, cultural values will also evolve positively, helping to achieve the curriculum's primary goal of producing intelligent and well-rounded students.

4 Conclusion

All curricula that have been implemented in Indonesia have a similar goal: to advance the nation's education system and develop a better generation through curriculum enhancement. The curriculum changes are essential to keep pace with the constantly evolving times. When the curriculum changes, the key challenge is how to respond wisely, striving to achieve the best outcomes while remaining competitive in the global education landscape. Educators must also be able to create classrooms that integrate character education into teaching activities, fostering habits that shape students'

character. Additionally, it is important to build a positive school culture that strengthens students' character.

The curriculum must persistently evolve in line with societal knowledge and the preservation of national cultural values. However, the ultimate goal remains the same: improving cultural structures and shaping the character of future generations to be well-rounded and ready to compete on a global stage.

The development of the curriculum within educational institutions requires careful attention. Teachers should position students' character as the primary focus, above cognitive and affective components, as character is the foundation that shapes students into complete individuals.

Educators must fully understand the concept of curriculum development, with a focus on character-building as the primary objective of education, aiming to improve cultural values. Character development through the curriculum can be achieved through various school activities, including intracurricular, extracurricular, and habitual practices. Additionally, educators are expected to apply creative and innovative teaching methods, taking into account the school environment, facilities, and available human resources. Support from educational stakeholders is crucial for overcoming challenges.

To improve the quality of education and foster character development in students, potential solutions include teacher and staff training and competency development, increased support from parents and the community, improved facilities and infrastructure, enhanced supervision and monitoring, and stronger collaboration among educational stakeholders.

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