

Comparative Analysis of the Concept and Implementation of Religious Character Education in the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum: A Case Study on Grade IV Students of SDN Longkek 2

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Abstract: Character education is a key component in the formation of a dignified and cultured generation, which is fundamentally transformed through the dynamics of the national education curriculum. This research aims to compare the concept and implementation of character education in the 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum at the primary school level. The case study was conducted on grade IV students of SDN Longkek 2 using descriptive qualitative research methods. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and interviews to analyse the differences in character education approaches in the two curricula. The results of this study concluded that the concept of character education in Curriculum 2013 is integrated into all subjects with main values such as religion, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation and integrity that are instilled in a structured and uniform manner. The implementation is carried out by teachers as role models, habituation of character values in class and school, and holistic assessment covering attitudes, knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, the Merdeka Curriculum implements Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile with similar values that are applied more flexibly according to school and student conditions. Cultivation of religious character is carried out through habituation such as saying greetings, bowing to teachers, being polite, communicating well, and praying in congregation. The research recommends strengthening teacher capacity, providing supporting infrastructure, and school collaboration with parents and communities to optimise the sustainable implementation of character education. Critically, each country faces structural and cultural challenges that require attention.

Keywords: Education Character, 2013 Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum

Abstrak: Pendidikan karakter merupakan komponen kunci dalam pembentukan generasi yang bermartabat dan berbudaya, yang secara fundamental bertransformasi melalui dinamika kurikulum pendidikan nasional. Penelitian ini bertujuan membandingkan konsep dan implementasi pendidikan karakter pada Kurikulum 2013 dan Kurikulum Merdeka di tingkat sekolah dasar. Studi kasus dilakukan pada siswa kelas IV SDN Longkek 2 dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan

wawancara untuk menganalisis perbedaan pendekatan pendidikan karakter dalam kedua kurikulum. Hasil dari penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa konsep pendidikan karakter dalam Kurikulum 2013 diintegrasikan ke seluruh mata pelajaran dengan nilai-nilai utama seperti religius, nasionalis, mandiri, gotong royong, dan integritas yang ditanamkan secara terstruktur dan seragam. Penerapannya dilakukan guru sebagai teladan, pembiasaan nilai-nilai karakter di kelas dan sekolah, serta penilaian holistik mencakup sikap, pengetahuan dan keterampilan. Sementara Kurikulum Merdeka menerapkan Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila dengan nilai-nilai serupa yang diterapkan lebih fleksibel menyesuaikan kondisi sekolah dan siswa. Penanaman karakter religius dilakukan melalui pembiasaan seperti mengucapkan salam, menunduk pada guru, bersikap sopan, berkomunikasi dengan baik, dan sholat berjamaah. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penguatan kapasitas guru, penyediaan infrastruktur pendukung, dan kolaborasi sekolah dengan orangtua serta komunitas guna mengoptimalkan implementasi pendidikan karakter secara berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Karakter, Kurikulum 2013, Kurikulum Merdeka

Introduction

Education is a systematic process that aims to transfer knowledge, skills, values, and norms to individuals with the intention that they can develop their potential optimally.¹ More than just providing information, education also includes character building, critical skills development, and the cultivation of ethical and moral attitudes. A number of experts agree that education aims to create an ideal human being or has values and norms that are held. Through education, humanization is carried out to improve individual understanding in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, in order to meet the needs of life.² Education also aims to create individuals who are in accordance with the character of the Indonesian nation, in line with the values of Pancasila.³ Thus, education is not only an instrument to educate, but

¹ Abd Rahman BP dkk., "Pengertian Pendidikan, Ilmu Pendidikan, dan Unsur-unsur Pendidikan," *Al Urwatul Wutsqa: Kajian Pendidikan Islam* Vol. 2, no. 1 (2022).

² Syafitri Nur Indah Sari dkk., "Peningkatan Hasil Belajar Melalui Model Problem Based Learning Pada Pelajaran Pendidikan Pancasila Kelas IV SDN 02 Malangiwan," *Jurnal Review Pendidikan dan Pengajaran* Vol. 7, no. 4 (2024): 13419-24.

³ Mohammad Fahmi Nugraha, Budi Hendrawan, dan Anggia Suci Pratiwi, *Pengantar Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Sekolah Dasar* (Tasikmalaya: Edu Publisher, 2020).

also a strategic means in shaping the personality, character, and identity of the nation based on the values of Pancasila, in order to create a generation that is superior, ethical, and ready to face the challenges of the times.

As a foundation for building human resources, education is not only limited to formal learning in the classroom, but encompasses broader aspects including learning from the environment, life experiences, social interactions, and cultural values, all of which play an important role in shaping individuals who can contribute positively to society and be able to compete in the era of globalization.⁴ As a sustainable process, education needs to continue to adapt to technological, economic, social, and cultural developments, and emphasize the importance of character education from an early age to create a generation that is not only intellectually superior but also has good moral qualities, so that they can face various challenges in modern life while still applying social ethics well.

Along with the times, education also demands constant adaptation to technological, economic, and social changes. Therefore, education is not the end goal, but rather an ongoing process to prepare individuals for the ever-evolving changes and challenges of modern life. In its development, it is also necessary to cultivate character education that is carried out from an early age in order to support the process of creating human resources that are intellectually and morally superior. Character education is an educational approach that not only focuses on developing academic abilities, but also emphasizes the formation of moral values, ethics, and positive attitudes such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and integrity in individuals.⁵ This character education aims to instill moral awareness and universal values such as tolerance, respect, justice, and social responsibility to form individuals who are not only intellectually superior, but also have a strong moral foundation to face various challenges in daily life and are able to make a positive contribution to society.⁶

Character education has become a vital component in the development of human resources with integrity, ethics, and responsibility, where its implementation is increasingly urgent amid the complexity of moral and social challenges in modern society that require a holistic approach in character formation of the younger generation. Although character education

⁴ Hasbullah, *Dasar-dasar Ilmu Pendidikan* (Depok: Rajawali Pers, 2017).

⁵ Anas Salahudin dan Irwanto Alkrienciehie, *Pendidikan Karakter (Pendidikan Berbasis Agama Dan Budaya Bangsa)* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2013).

⁶ Yahya Khan, *Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Potensi Diri* (Yogyakarta: Pelangi Publishing, 2010).

has been recognized as an important part of the national curriculum and involves a collaborative role between formal educational institutions, families, and communities, there are still challenges in its implementation, including obstacles in effectively transferring values into students' daily lives, differences in interpretation, limited resources, and the impact of curriculum changes that can affect the effectiveness of the process of instilling character values aforementioned. This is in line with the results of research by Adiba Maulidiyah et al. explaining that teachers have an important role in shaping the character of madrasah students through various programs that are also supported by parents and students' enthusiasm, so that the goal of character formation is achieved well.⁷

Regarding the challenges of implementing character education, the development of the national education curriculum continues to undergo adjustments to find the most effective format in instilling character values in students.⁸ The changes in the curriculum that have occurred in Indonesia are considered to be influenced by human needs that are always changing due to the encouragement of external factors. According to Suyadi, the curriculum change is intended to improve and balance between attitude competencies, skills and knowledge.⁹ Therefore, curriculum changes that occur, especially in Indonesia, are natural and must occur in the world of education to adapt to the times. Currently, the curriculum that is being implemented in the education system in Indonesia is the Independent Curriculum. This curriculum has just replaced the 2013 Curriculum that was previously implemented.

The curriculum change is an adaptive response to the dynamics of human needs and the influence of external factors such as differences in one or more curriculum components between certain periods, so that these changes are then realized with the transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the

⁷ Adiba Maulidiyah, Devy Habibi Muhammad, dan Muhammad Alfi Syahrin, "Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Religious Dalam Membentuk Kepribadian Siswa Di Madrasah Tsanawiyah Miftahussalam Kecamatan Lumbang Kabupaten Probolinggo," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (1 September 2022): 29–44, <https://doi.org/10.37286/ojs.v8i2.158>.

⁸ Yuliyanti, Evi Damayanti, dan Lukman Nulhakim, "Perkembangan Kurikulum Sekolah Dasar di Indonesia dan Perbedaan dengan Kurikulum Beberapa Negara," *Lingua Rima: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia* Vol. 11, no. 3 (2022).

⁹ Suyadi, *Strategi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Karakter* (Jawa Barat: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2013).

current Independent Curriculum.¹⁰ The two curricula have similarities in the focus of development of three learning domains - cognitive, affective, and psychomotor - where the 2013 Curriculum emphasizes character education through the vertical and horizontal integration of subjects reflected in the Core Competencies (KI-1 to KI-4) covering spiritual, social, knowledge, and skills aspects.¹¹

The 2013 curriculum is a national curriculum that has been developed over many years and includes two dimensions of the curriculum, namely planning and arrangement related to objectives, content, lesson materials, and how to implement learning. The purpose of the 2013 Curriculum is to prepare the Indonesian generation to have the ability to live as individuals and citizens who are faithful, productive, creative, innovative, effective, and able to contribute to the life of society, nation, state, and world civilization. The characteristics of the 2013 Curriculum include the development of balanced competencies, contextualization of education according to school conditions, time flexibility, competencies that are detailed in detail, core competencies as organizing elements, as well as mutual strengthening and enriching between one competency and another.¹²

The 2013 curriculum was formulated with the aim of improving the education system in Indonesia, replacing the previous curriculum, namely the 2006 Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). The core of the 2013 Curriculum is an effort to simplify and integrate learning thematically. This curriculum is prepared to form a generation that is ready to face future challenges.¹³ In another study by Faradilla, et al. explained that the main focus of the 2013 Curriculum is to form fully competent students, both in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Thus, the 2013 Curriculum is present as an important foundation in the formation of students who are not only

¹⁰ Soetopo dan Soemanto, *Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Kurikulum Sebagai Substansi Problem Administrasi Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 1991).

¹¹ Siti Aisyah dan Ririn Astuti, "Analisis Mengenai Telaah Kurikulum K-13 pada Jenjang Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Basicedu* Vol.5 No. 6 (2021).

¹² Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran, "Kurikulum 2013," Sistem Informasi Kurikulum Nasional, diakses 22 Maret 2024, <http://kurikulum.kemdikbud.go.id/kurikulum-2013>.

¹³ Ana Nurhasanah, Reksa Adya Pribadi, dan M. Dapid Nur, "ANALISIS KURIKULUM 2013," *Didaktik : Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang* 7, no. 02 (31 Desember 2021): 484-93, <https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v7i02.239>.

intellectually intelligent, but also have strong character and skills that are relevant to the needs of the times.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that offers diverse intracurricular learning, where the learning content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. In this curriculum, teachers have the flexibility to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be tailored to the learning needs and interests of students. The Merdeka Curriculum gives educators the freedom to create quality learning that suits the needs and learning environment of students, with characteristics such as developing soft skills and character, focusing on essential materials, and flexible learning.¹⁵ The Merdeka Curriculum maintains its focus on the three learning domains in the 2013 Curriculum, but also brings innovation with a special emphasis on creating a pleasant learning atmosphere for all parties involved, including teachers, students, and parents.¹⁶ In addition, according to Laily Rahmah et al., the Merdeka Curriculum has great potential to improve the quality of learning, provided that there must be intensive teacher training and improvement of educational infrastructure.¹⁷

Although the 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum have been designed to support the strengthening of character education in schools, in its implementation there are still various challenges faced by educational units, including at the primary school level. One of the main problems is the difficulty of teachers in effectively integrating character values in the learning process, both due to limited understanding of the curriculum, lack of in-depth training, and limited facilities and infrastructure to support character-based learning. At SDN Longkek 2 itself, although it has implemented both curricula, further studies are needed to find out the extent to which the application of character values can be translated into learning activities and

¹⁴ Faradilla Intan Sari, Dadang Sunendar, dan Dadang Anshori, "Analisis Perbedaan Kurikulum 2013 Dan Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Konseling (JPDK)* 5, no. 1 (2 Januari 2023): 146-51, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jpdk.v5i1.10843>.

¹⁵ Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran, "Kurikulum Merdeka," Kurikulum Merdeka, diakses 22 Maret 2024, <http://kurikulum.kemdikbud.go.id/kurikulum-merdeka/>.

¹⁶ Suri Wahyuni Nasution, "Assesment Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Di Sekolah Dasar," *Prosding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Dasar* 1 No. 1 (2021).

¹⁷ Laily Rahmah dkk., "Navigating the Curriculum Landscape: The Impact of Curriculum 2013 and Merdeka Curriculum on Teachers' and Students' Learning Outcomes in Indonesia," *Journal of Ecohumanism* 3, no. 6 (17 September 2024): 917-31, <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i6.4061>.

school culture, as well as the challenges faced by teachers and schools in these efforts.

Therefore, the research was conducted with the aim of finding out the difference in the concept and application of character education between the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum applied to grade IV students of SDN Longkek 2. This research is expected to produce recommendations for curriculum development in Indonesia in the future. By comparing the concept and implementation of character education in the two curricula, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing differences so that they can be used as evaluation materials and recommendations for better curriculum development in the future, according to the needs of students.

Method

The method used in this study is qualitative research with a case study approach. According to Sugiyono, the qualitative approach is a research method based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to research objects in natural circumstances, with the researcher acting as a key instrument and data collection techniques are carried out in a triangulation (combined) manner, as well as data analysis is inductive or qualitative, where the results of qualitative research are more emphasizing deep meaning rather than generalization.¹⁸ This approach was chosen because this study requires an in-depth description or exposure of data that allows researchers to comprehensively explore and understand the concept and application of character education in the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum in Grade IV students of SDN Longkek 2. This research applies a case study approach, the case study approach is a form of empirical research that examines contemporary phenomena or cases in the context of daily life, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and its context cannot be clearly separated.¹⁹

This data collection was obtained through literature studies, observations, and interviews with educators who teach grade IV students of SDN Longkek 2, so that later the researcher will get the data and information needed in this study. Based on the results of data collection through observation, researchers obtained information about learning activities in

¹⁸ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Kuantitatif dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019).

¹⁹ Astria Cindiawati dkk., "Representasi Jabar Masagi dalam Penguatan Karakter Peserta Didik di SMAN 19 Kota Bandung," *Faktor : Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan* 11, no. 3 (15 Februari 2025): 233–42, <https://doi.org/10.30998/fjik.v11i3.21966>.

Class IV at SDN Longkek 2, which aims to find out how character education is implemented in the class. Furthermore, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the principal, homeroom teacher, and religious education teacher to explore the understanding and implementation of character education based on the two curricula used. In addition, researchers also conducted a literature study by reviewing various literature such as books, scientific articles, and relevant documents, to complement the findings from observations and interviews.

The collected data was then analysed through the data reduction stage, which is the process of filtering, summarising, and selecting relevant data, as well as identifying important patterns and main themes from the entire field data. This stage includes systematic recording, grouping data based on the focus of the problem, and determining the appropriate unit of analysis. The data that has been reduced is then presented in descriptive form and accompanied by a table of relationships between categories, to facilitate interpretation. The final step is drawing conclusions obtained through in-depth analysis of the data that has been presented, with the aim of obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of character education in the school environment under study.

Result and Discussion

Character education in Novan Ardy Wiyani's view is a system that aims to instill character values in all school residents. This system includes three components, namely knowledge of character values, awareness or willingness to apply these values, and concrete actions in implementing character values. The values instilled include relationships with God Almighty, oneself, fellow humans, the environment, and nationality. The ultimate goal of character education is to form a whole and perfect human being.²⁰ Character education also refers to efforts to instill thinking intelligence, appreciation in attitudes, and experiences through actions in accordance with the values that become their identity, which are applied in interactions with oneself, the environment, and spirituality. The success of character education is reflected in the teacher's personality and ability to understand students, including understanding their internal problems, future challenges, and difficulties faced.²¹

Character education can be interpreted as an effort to shape the values, morals, morals, and personality of students so that they can make good

²⁰ Novan Ardy Wiyani, *Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Iman dan Taqwa* (Yogyakarta: Teras, 2012).

²¹ *Dasar-dasar Ilmu Pendidikan*.

decisions, maintain goodness, and practice and spread goodness in daily life with full dedication. In addition, character education also refers to the role of teachers in shaping the character of students by being an example to be followed. Teachers play a key role in shaping students' character through the way they speak, deliver material, behavior, and other related aspects.

Character education has three main functions that are interrelated in the formation of individual personality and the development of the nation. The first function focuses on internal development by building and growing the potential of students to be able to think and behave in accordance with the philosophy of Pancasila. The second function is oriented towards external strengthening through the correction and strengthening of the role of various elements of society, including families, educational units, communities, and the government to actively participate and be responsible in building the nation towards more advanced, Merdeka, and prosperous conditions. The third function is protective as a filter for foreign cultures that are not in harmony with the cultural values and character of the Indonesian nation, allowing the community to sort out constructive global influences and avoid negative impacts that can erode national identity.²²

In accordance with the function of national education, character education is aimed at developing abilities and shaping the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation. The purpose of character education is in line with the views of the Ministry of National Education, which in essence aims to build a resilient, competitive, noble, moral, tolerant, cooperative, patriotic spirit, dynamic development, and oriented to science and technology.²³ The entire purpose is based on faith and piety to God Almighty in accordance with the philosophy of Pancasila. Thus, character education is directed to form Indonesian human beings and citizens who not only excel in mastering science and technology, but also have a strong character and personality based on the noble values of the nation.

Character education is one of the important aspects that is of concern in both the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum not only focuses on developing students' cognitive aspects, but also emphasizes the importance of forming positive characters that can shape students' personalities into cultured and dignified people. Education not only aims to develop academic aspects, but must also be able to form positive

²² I. Wayan Eka Santika, "Pendidikan Karakter Pada Pembelajaran Daring," *Indonesian Values and Character Education Journal* 3, no. 1 (6 Agustus 2020): 8–19, <https://doi.org/10.23887/ivcej.v3i1.27830>.

²³ Kemdiknas, *Pedoman Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Karakter (Berdasarkan Pengalaman di Satuan Pendidikan Rintisan)* (Jakarta: Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan, 2011).

characters in students.

To analyze in depth the conceptual and implementive differences in character education in the two curricula, a comprehensive and systematic empirical study is needed. This study seeks to reveal the dynamics of character education transformation that occurred in the transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum, by taking concrete cases of fourth grade students of SDN Longkek 2 as research subjects. The selection of the location and subject of this study is based on the consideration that SDN Longkek 2 has implemented both curricula continuously, so that it allows researchers to obtain a complete picture of the comparison of the two curricula.

A series of research processes were carried out with observation first, and interviews to collect the data needed in the research process. The interviews were conducted by involving several educators related to grade IV students, namely school principals, homeroom teachers of grade IV, and teachers of religious subjects. By involving resource persons from various parties, the researcher obtained comprehensive information related to the application of character education to grade IV students at SDN Longkek 2. The researcher conducted an interview to find out that the implementation of character education in the 2013 curriculum and the Merdeka curriculum at SDN Longkek 2.

SDN Longkek 2 is one of the elementary schools that implements character education in an integrated manner in the learning process. This school believes that education does not only focus on the academic aspect, but must also be able to form a positive character in students. Therefore, the cultivation of character values such as religious, nationalist, Merdeka, mutual cooperation, and integrity has become an important part of the school curriculum. Character education at SDN Longkek 2 is carried out through various strategies, both in classroom learning activities and extracurricular activities. In learning, teachers try to integrate character content into subjects in a contextual and interesting method for students. In addition, the school also holds activities such as flag ceremonies, social activities, and competitions that can foster positive character in students.²⁴

To support the success of character education, SDN Longkek 2 involves all parties in the school, including the principal, teachers, staff, and parents of students. The school regularly monitors the development of students' character and provides necessary guidance. With a strong commitment to character education, it is hoped that the next generation of the nation will have

²⁴ "Profil Sekolah," *SDN Longkek 2* (blog), diakses 19 Mei 2024, <https://longkek02.sdbangkalan.id/profil-sekolah/>.

intellectual intelligence and noble character according to the values of character education. The research conducted revealed information about the concept and implementation of character education based on the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum for grade IV students. Through observation and data collection in the field, researchers gained an in-depth understanding of the integration of character education in the learning process. The information includes methods, approaches, and strategies used by SDN Longkek 2 educators in instilling character values.

The educators of SDN Longkek 2 apply the pattern of character education as initiated by Ki Hajar Dewantara, namely *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha* which means that when in front of students, educators must provide examples or examples. Secondly, namely *Ing Madya Mangun Karsa* Which means that when in the midst of students, educators build willpower or ideals, which also means motivating students to always be diligent in learning and pursuing their goals. Third, namely *Tut Wuri Handayani* Which means that when educators are behind the students, the educators give encouragement or encouragement to the students. These principles reflect the attitude that an educator should have.²⁵ These principles reflect the attitude that an educator should have. Although it looks simple, this concept has a significant impact on forming positive characters in students. By applying these principles, educators can be a good role model and help develop personality qualities that are beneficial to student development.

Teachers at SDN Longkek 2 strive to be good role models for students by showing behavior that reflects the character values taught. Through this approach, it is hoped that students will not only understand the concept of character education cognitively, but also be able to internalize and implement it in daily life. Based on the results of observations at SDN Longkek 2, the implementation of character education has shown significant success. This can be seen from the orderly behavior of students during break hours, without any quarrels or commotions. When the teacher leaves the classroom, students take advantage of the time to finish the assignment calmly and only talk when necessary. The results of interviews and observations indicate that there are a number of rules that must be followed by all school members. These rules aim to create a conducive and orderly learning environment for students and teachers. With these regulations, it is hoped that students can develop good character in accordance with the educational goals at SDN Longkek 2.

The existence of character components such as religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hard work, creative, Merdeka, national spirit, and love

²⁵ Armijati Tutwuri Handajani, Kepala Sekolah SDN Longkek 2, 16 Mei 2024.

for the homeland in the 2013 Curriculum, it is appropriate that these values be instilled in the educational process. The concepts and components contained in the curriculum must be realized in application in the field so that the goals of character education can be achieved optimally with the hope that students will not only understand character concepts theoretically, but also be able to internalize and actualize them in daily life as a provision to become human beings with noble character and useful for society.

In the 2013 Curriculum, character education is an important component that is thoroughly integrated into the educational process. There are 18 main character values that are focused, including religious, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, national spirit, and love for the homeland.²⁶ These character values are not taught as a separate subject, but are integrated into all subjects and activities in school. The implementation of character education in the 2013 Curriculum is mandatory and comprehensive at all levels of education.²⁷ Teachers have the obligation to insert the cultivation of these character values in the learning process in the classroom, as well as in other activities such as extracurricular activities, scouting, and activities outside of school. In addition, teachers and other education personnel are also required to be role models in implementing these positive characters.

One of the main objectives of the implementation of character education in the 2013 Curriculum is to ensure that students not only achieve academic intelligence, but also have character and positive values inherent in them. By incorporating values such as honesty, religiousness, discipline, and responsibility into all subjects, it is hoped that students can develop a positive character as a whole in the daily learning process. The role of parents is very important in shaping the character of students. This is because the time spent by children with their parents at home is more than the child's time at school. Therefore, parents can continue to direct and supervise their children's behavior so that they always behave well even though they are not in the school environment. With the involvement of parents in the process of character building, efforts made at school can be supported and continued at home so that positive values can be embedded more strongly in children.

The implementation of character education is carried out through several main approaches, namely example, habituation, supervision, and collaboration. The exemplary approach is applied by the teacher giving good

²⁶ Kemdiknas, *Pengembangan Pendidikan Budaya dan Karakter Bangsa* (Jakarta: Puskur, 2010).

²⁷ Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Draf Dokumen Kurikulum 2013* (Jakarta: Kemendikbud, 2013).

examples and examples to students, such as coming on time to exemplify the character of discipline. Meanwhile, the habituation approach is carried out both inside and outside the classroom, such as accustoming students to be orderly, not joking, and doing assignments during learning, as well as supervising so as not to fight during breaks.²⁸ In addition, teachers also supervise student behavior and collaborate with parents by exchanging information about children's behavior at home. This aims to ensure consistency in character cultivation in the school and family environment. In the context of certain subjects, teachers can place more emphasis on character cultivation relevant specifics. For example, religious teachers emphasize more on cultivating religious character, politeness, and noble morals through habits such as saying greetings, bowing down to the teacher, communicating well, and praying in congregation.²⁹

Efforts to implement character education in the 2013 Curriculum are carried out consistently and comprehensively, both in the classroom and outside the classroom, by involving the active role of teachers, students, and parents. The main goal is to instill positive characters, such as discipline, responsibility, religious, and noble morals, in students through a process of habituation, example, supervision, and continuous collaboration.

Although the conceptual design of character education in the 2013 Curriculum is considered good, its implementation in the field still faces a number of significant obstacles. The fundamental weakness lies in the rigidly structured methodology and minimal adaptability, with character indicators that have been specifically set without taking into account the variation in individual abilities and contexts of the learners. A more adaptive approach that focuses on students' unique characteristics is believed to be more effective in shaping character. Integrating the character education dimension into the overall subject also creates an additional workload for educators, who must incorporate character elements in every learning activity. The character evaluation system is also problematic due to the ambiguity of assessment criteria, creating difficulties for educators in accurately determining the categorization of student character development.

Implementation challenges also arise from the limited literacy of teachers regarding the essence of character education in the 2013 Curriculum, as a consequence of the lack of comprehensive training and mentoring programs. The mechanism of assessing character development is considered complex and difficult to quantify precisely, given that character dimensions are multifaceted and abstract. External factors such as the limitations of

²⁸ Fierman Aromanya, Wali Kelas 4 SDN Longkek 2, 16 Mei 2024.

²⁹ Asy'ari, Guru Agama SDN Longkek 2, 16 Mei 2024.

exemplary models and ecosystems that support character formation outside educational institutions are obstacles in maintaining the continuity of value instilling in students. The limitation of learning materials and reference sources also makes it difficult for educators to effectively internalize character values to students. The inadequacy of infrastructure and supporting facilities in educational institutions also contributes significantly to hindering the optimization of the implementation of sustainable and systematic character education.

The advantages of the implementation of character education in the 2013 curriculum are that the character values that must be instilled such as religious, honesty, discipline, and national spirit have been clearly established and apply equally to all students in Indonesia. This provides direction and focus for teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating character education in schools using the same references. The 2013 curriculum encourages students to actively learn through various learning methods, assess overall character development, develop students' skills, and involve the role of parents and society. Thus, it is hoped that it can produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also noble in character and ready to face future challenges. According to observations, the varied learning methods in the 2013 Curriculum make students more active in practicing religious values. The assessment does not only focus on the academic aspect, but also includes the development of students' religious character as a whole by involving the role of parents and the community environment.

In the Merdeka Curriculum, the concept of character education applied is to build a Pancasila Student Profile. The goal is to form a student profile with character in accordance with the values of Pancasila, such as faith, global diversity, cooperation, independence, and critical reasoning.³⁰ The term used in the Merdeka Curriculum for character education is Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila. From this program, character education will be implemented. The Pancasila Student Profile contains five main character points commonly referred to as P5, namely faith, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, and critical reasoning.³¹ In its implementation, there are several stages, namely reflection that provides an overview of the material to each student, giving quizzes or competency tests, and affective

³⁰ Rega Agustina dkk., "Pendidikan Karakter Pada Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Pembelajaran IPS di SD/MI," *Journey: Journal of Development and Research in Education* Vol 3 No 2 (2023): 35–40.

³¹ Nina Indriani, Indrianis Suryani, dan Lu'lu'ul Mukarromah, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dalam Pembentukan Karakter Disiplin Peserta Didik di Sekolah Dasar," *Khazanah Pendidikan*, Maret 2023.

assessment³². With the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile, the formation of students is not only focused on the aspect of academic intelligence alone, but also emphasizes character development that is in harmony with Pancasila values.³³

The application of character education in the Merdeka Curriculum to fourth grade students of SDN Longkek 2 has similarities with the 2013 Curriculum, but with the main difference in its flexibility. While the 2013 Curriculum sets the character points that must be applied rigidly, the Merdeka Curriculum allows teachers and students to adjust their application according to their respective abilities. In this approach, teachers are not forced to achieve certain targets, but rather create a more relaxed and comfortable learning atmosphere for students. In addition, technology is also utilized, such as the use of WhatsApp groups to get students used to communicating politely. In this way, character education is still instilled in a fun atmosphere. Teachers can interact more with students about values such as discipline and responsibility in between lessons. Through icebreaking activities or small games, students become more enthusiastic and actively involved in the learning process. With this flexibility, the cultivation of character values can be done effectively and fun.

The concept and application of character education through the Merdeka Curriculum has several shortcomings. The initial implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum faced various obstacles due to the unpreparedness of educators, causing various deficiencies in its implementation, although these conditions have improved significantly over time. Learning support infrastructure that focuses on character building is still below optimal standards, with utilization levels that have not yet reached maximum effectiveness. Within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, learners are faced with the expectation to proactively develop independence, responsibility, and creativity, creating challenges for educators in providing comprehensive facilitation and guidance. The transformation of teaching methodology from a monologue pattern to dynamic interaction is a must for educators, who are required to create a conducive learning ecosystem to stimulate students' independence according to their individual potential. The demands of pedagogical competence have not been fully mastered by all educators, so it becomes a significant additional burden in the process of

³² Titin Sunaryati dkk., "Studi Literatur: Analisis Kompetensi Guru dalam Pelaksanaan Evaluasi Pembelajaran pada Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Review Pendidikan dan Pengajaran* Vol. 7, no. 3 (2024).

³³ Komang Surya Adnyana, "Peran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial dalam Pembentukan Karakter," *Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar* Vol 1 No 1 (Maret 2020): 11-20.

adapting the new curriculum.

Limited access to information technology and adequate digital learning platforms is a substantial obstacle in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum effectively and comprehensively. The complexity of integrative thematic learning planning requires educators to allocate more time and resources to the teaching preparation process, adding to the existing workload. The disparity in readiness and support from the school's external environment, including family and community, also contributes to the inconsistency in the implementation of the concept of Merdeka learning which is the philosophical foundation of this curriculum. These multidimensional challenges hinder the achievement of the transformative goals of character education as proclaimed in the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum which prioritizes flexibility and personalization of learning. This problem requires a holistic and collaborative approach from various stakeholders to create a comprehensive support ecosystem for the implementation of a curriculum that is more adaptive and responsive to the needs of students in the contemporary era.

In addition, the Merdeka Curriculum has advantages in terms of flexibility in the learning process. Teachers are not required to achieve certain targets in the assessment of student attitudes, so that students can develop naturally. The assessment is carried out holistically by considering aspects of attitudes, knowledge, and skills according to the interests, talents, and development of each student. Another advantage of the Merdeka Curriculum is that the learning process is more centered on students, so that they can explore their respective potentials, interests, and talents according to their abilities. In addition, this curriculum also provides greater freedom for teachers to be creative in designing learning that is tailored to the conditions and needs of their students.

The Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility supported by access to technology that facilitates the learning process. Teachers can leverage technology to monitor students' progress even when they are at home. Meanwhile, students can also access various digital learning resources such as learning videos and materials from the internet according to their interests and needs. Access to this technology allows the learning process to be more enjoyable and meaningful for students by utilizing various available media.

In the 2013 Curriculum, character education is integrated into all subjects and school activities. Character values such as religious, nationalist, Merdeka, mutual cooperation, and integrity are sought to be instilled through classroom learning, extracurricular activities, and habituation in the school environment. Teachers play the role of role models and facilitators in instilling these values.

The 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum have the same main

goal, which is to form students to have good character and personality, and can contribute positively to the community and the surrounding environment. In achieving these goals, the two curricula emphasize the importance of instilling key character values such as religious, nationalist, Merdeka, mutual cooperation, and integrity to students through an integrated and holistic educational process. Meanwhile, the Merdeka Curriculum, which began to be implemented gradually in 2022, offers a more flexible and contextual approach to character education. This curriculum emphasizes character development through meaningful learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom. Students are encouraged to get involved in real projects that have a positive impact on society and the surrounding environment.

Although there are some similarities in the concept and application of character education between the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, the two also have quite significant differences. These differences include:

In the 2013 Curriculum, the learning process takes place more in the classroom with direction from the teacher. Meanwhile, in the Merdeka Curriculum, students are more directly involved in projects and experiences outside the classroom, not just in the classroom. For the curriculum itself, the 2013 Curriculum is more structured and the rules are the same for all schools. However, in the Merdeka Curriculum, the curriculum is more flexible, schools can adapt it to local circumstances and needs, so it is not uniform like in the 2013 Curriculum. In addition, teachers must follow the curriculum and guidebooks that have been set. They can't really change the material or the way they teach. However, in the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are given greater freedom to design the teaching and learning process and develop their own subject matter. So, it can be adjusted to the needs and circumstances of students and the local environment.

In the 2013 Curriculum, students tend to occupy the position of recipients of knowledge conveyed by educators. In contrast to this, the Merdeka Curriculum encourages students to participate proactively in the learning process, conduct Merdeka exploration, and develop characterful aspects through the implementation of applicable projects in the context of real life. Regarding the character evaluation mechanism, the 2013 Curriculum dominantly implements structured assessments through formal evaluation instruments and written tests. Meanwhile, the assessment system in the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes more on comprehensive observation of the manifestations of students' behaviors and actions in their daily lives, which is enriched by the process of self-reflection carried out by students as an integral part of the development of their characterary awareness.

Although both curricula have the same fundamental goal in shaping the character of dignified students, there are significant differences in the approaches, methodologies, and evaluation systems applied. The transition from a more structured and prescriptive approach in the 2013 Curriculum to a more flexible and student-centered paradigm in the Merdeka Curriculum reflects the evolution of understanding of how character can be developed more effectively and sustainably. A deep understanding of the similarities and differences between the two curricula is an important foundation for education stakeholders to continue to refine the strategy for implementing character education that is adaptive and responsive to the needs of Indonesia's future generations.

Table 1. Comparison Results Regarding the Concept and Implementation of Character Education with the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum for Grade IV Students at SDN Longkek 2

2013 Curriculum	Merdeka Curriculum
Concept of Character Education:	
1. Consists of core competencies and basic competencies 2. Integrated into all subjects with the main values to be instilled in a structured and uniform manner 3. The assessment covers aspects of attitude, knowledge and skills holistically	1. It is called Strengthening the Pancasila Learner Profile 2. Structured with a wide variety of real projects that involve learners 3. Character assessment through behavioural observation and self-reflection involving parents and the community
Character Education Values Developed:	
1. Religious Holding prayer practices, organising prophet's maulid events, bowing when passing in front of the teacher 2. Nationalist Holding ceremonies every Monday and other important anniversaries, 3. Integrity Training children to always be honest, teaching students to be responsible for their respective tasks. 4. Independent Giving daily assignments, organising class picket schedules, etc.	1. Religious Conducting dhuha prayers in congregation every Wednesday, requiring students to say greetings when starting to interact in Whatsapp groups, etc. 2. Global Diversity Exploring the arts from various regions, in the form of learning to sing and dance typical of the region. 3. Collaboration Giving group assignments consisting of several students 4. Independent

5. Community Work Organising regular cleaning activities in the school area	Train students to learn to organise their personal schedule daily. 5. Critical Reasoning Invite students to discuss and give their opinion on a certain topic.
Implementation of Character Education:	
1. Implementation is carried out by teachers as role models and habituation of character values both in the classroom and school environment with varied methods. 2. There are already defined aspects, and teachers must apply these aspects to all students.	1. The Merdeka curriculum is more flexible to adjust to the abilities of students and school conditions. 2. Teachers have the flexibility to design learning to develop student character through real projects. 3. Apart from teachers and students, the implementation also involves parents and the surrounding community.

Conclusion

The purpose of implementing character education in the 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum is to form students with Pancasila character through integrating values such as religion, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity in learning. The 2013 Curriculum applies a structured and uniform approach through all subjects with teachers as role models, using varied methods and holistic assessments covering attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Meanwhile, the Merdeka Curriculum offers a more flexible approach through real projects tailored to student and school conditions, with observation- and reflection-based character assessment involving parents and the community. The cultivation of religious character, manners, and noble morals is carried out through habituation such as saying greetings, bowing the head to the teacher, good manners, communicating well, and praying in congregation. To optimise its implementation, there is a need for training and mentoring for teachers, provision of adequate technological infrastructure, strengthening collaboration with parents and the community, and encouragement for

teachers to continue developing innovative and contextual learning so that character education runs effectively and sustainably.

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