

THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN STRENGTHENING CHARACTER EDUCATION IN BASIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to describe the role and contribution of integrating the merdeka curriculum in strengthening students' character education in basic education. This research is a descriptive qualitative research with a literature study approach. The data collection techniques were carried out through the documentation method of journals, articles, and books related to the Pancasila and character education student profile project programme. The data analysis technique consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study are to interpret the theoretical basis regarding the independent curriculum in strengthening character education in basic education which includes: (1) merdeka Curriculum; (2) Character Education; (3) Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) Project in Strengthening Character Education. It was concluded that the merdeka curriculum focuses on improving the quality and quality of education academically and developing the character of students. The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) programme in the merdeka curriculum is effective in developing character education and the personality of students who are moral, polite, courteous, and ethical based on the nation's culture and the noble values of Pancasila.

Keywords: Merdeka Curriculum; Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5); Character Education..

ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini ialah untuk mendeskripsikan peranaan dan kontribusi pengintegrasian kurikulum merdeka khususnya program proyek profil pelajar pancasila dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter pada pendidikan dasar. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan study literature. Teknik pengumpulan data di lakukan melalui metode dokumentasi terhadap jurnal, artikel, maupun buku yang berkaitan dengan program proyek profil pelajar pancasila dsn pendidikan karakter. Teknik analisis data terdiri dari reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini ialah menginterprestasikan landasan teori mengenai kurikulum merdeka dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter pada pendidikan dasar yang meliputi: (1) Kurikulum Merdeka; (2) Pendidikan Karakter; (3) Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) Dalam Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter. Didapatkan kesimpulan bahwa kurikulum merdeka berfokus meningkatkan mutu dan kualitas pendidikan secara akademik dan pengembangan karakter peserta didik. Program Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5)

dalam kurikulum merdeka efektif dalam pengembangan pendidikan karakter dan kepribadian peserta didik yang bermoral, sopan, santun, dan beretika berdasarkan budaya bangsa dan nilai-nilai luhur Pancasila.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Merdeka; Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5); Pendidikan Karakter.

A. Introduction

The curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several changes and developments, the independent curriculum is the latest curriculum issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Ministry of Education and Research) which is implemented in educational units in Indonesia. The Merdeka curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning where schools and teachers are given freedom and autonomy in developing teaching methods and teaching tools that are tailored to the needs and interests of students (Kemendikbud, 2022). In addition, what is new in the Merdeka curriculum is the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) program. The character of the Pancasila student profile is the result of the formulation of Indonesia's national education goals (Kahfi, 2022).

The Pancasila student profile was born from the contribution of the thoughts and ideals of the father of

Indonesian education Ki Hadjar Dewantara related to the education system in Indonesia. The Pancasila learner profile is the realization of Indonesian students who are lifelong learners who have global competence, character, and behave in accordance with the values of Pancasila (Susilo, 2023; Irawati, 2022). This is expected to be realized through the P5 learning process (Rusnaini, *et al.*, 2021).

The competence of graduates of the Pancasila learner profile is realized through six dimensions, namely (1) faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble character; (2) independent; (3) critical reasoning; (4) creative; (5) mutual cooperation; and (6) global diversity (Kemendikbud, 2020, Martant, *et al.*, 2022; Triprastyo, 2022). These dimensions are indicators in the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) program (Kemendikbud, 2020). Through these six dimensions, it is hoped that the character of the

Pancasila spirit can be embedded in students (Rahayuningsih, 2021). So as to encourage students to always contribute to the surrounding environment, become lifelong learners, competent, intelligent and have character in accordance with the Pancasila student profile (Ulandari & Rapita, 2023).

One of the education that must grow in students is character education. The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) program aims to shape and grow the character of students (Sari & Faizin, 2023; Siswati. *et al.*, 2018). The project program to strengthen the student profile of Pancasila is expected to be an effort to improve the quality and quality of education through character education (Lestari, *et al.*, 2023; Nurasih, *et al.*, 2022). So that it can realize graduates who prioritize character building and have the necessary abilities or skills in affirming the noble values of Pancasila (Afriatmei, *et al.*, 2023; Syafi'i, 2021).

With a good understanding of Pancasila values, it will be a valuable asset for students to shape their character (Nurfatimah, *et al.*, 2020). Because the purpose of education is not only to seek knowledge, but also to shape the character of students

who are ethical and polite in social behavior (Arifudin, *et al.*, 2020). Character education can be understood as moral education, character education, religious education, character education, and value education (Arifudin, 2022; Wahab, *et al.*, 2022).

The purpose of character education itself basically encourages the birth of good human beings, who have attractive personalities, are ethical, unpretentious, honest, intelligent, caring, and resilient (Fardiansyah, *et al.*, 2022). In order for the character of students to develop well in accordance with the values of Pancasila, it is necessary to strengthen character education through P5 (Sulastri, *et al.*, 2022). The role of teachers is a key factor in instilling character education to students, which can be done with concrete activities (Karmed, *et al.*, 2021; Prasetyo, *et al.*, 2019). This character cultivation can also take the form of reinforcement, imitation, modeling, advice, and habituation (Nalle & Nahak, 2022).

Character education is a concern, because nowadays there are problems in the form of deviant behavior, moral and moral crises that appear among students (Izza, *et al.*,

2020; Anisyah, *et al.*, 2023). The behavioral habits of students in everyday life are character values in themselves. With the rise of juvenile delinquency, strengthening the character education of students is very important in an effort to reduce the moral crisis, character crisis, moral crisis, cases of bullying, bullying, and violence where students are the perpetrators.

Based on this description, the purpose of this research is to describe the role and contribution of integrating the Merdeka curriculum in strengthening character education in basic education.

B. Research Methods

This research is a descriptive qualitative research with a literature study research approach. Study literature is defined as a series of activities related to library data collection methods, reading and recording and processing research materials (Zed, 2014). This research seeks to describe the role and contribution of integrating the merdeka curriculum, especially the Pancasila student profile project program in strengthening character education in basic education.

The data collection technique in this research is documentation of relevant literature such as journals, articles, books related to the research topic so that data or information related to the problem under study is obtained. Data collection technique is the most strategic step in research because the main purpose of research is to get data (Bahri, 2021)

As for the data analysis technique in this study, it consists of data reduction, which is an activity of summarizing, taking the main and very important data made into certain categories and patterns so that it has meaning. Data display where in qualitative research the presentation of data is presented systematically in the form of summaries, charts, tables, relationships between categories, patterns and others so that it is easily understood by the reader. Then the last Conclusion drawing / verification is the last activity in the form of drawing decisions or conclusions that must provide answers to the research formulation under study.

C. Research Results and Discussion Merdeka Curriculum

Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that provides freedom and autonomy to schools and educators in

developing and designing teaching tools and selecting learning approaches tailored to the conditions of the needs of diverse learner interests.

So that an Merdeka curriculum can be interpreted as the freedom of an education system from the shackles that complicate and limit the space for educators and students (Daga, 2021; Mustaghfiroh, 2020). The Merdeka curriculum focuses on giving learners sufficient time to explore concepts and develop skills and flexibility for teachers to differentiate learning based on student ability (Deni, 2022; Salmiyanti & Desyandri, 2023). This flexibility makes learning simpler, including plans to implement learning worksheets, School exams move to continuous assessment such as portfolios (Achmad, *et al.*, 2022).

In an Merdeka curriculum, learners are free to choose what they want to learn according to their desires and interests to achieve something they want (Susilawati, 2021; Wijaya, *et al.*, 2020). The intended paradigm shift includes strengthening the independence of teachers as controllers in the learning process, releasing the control of standards that are too binding and demand

homogeneous learning processes in all educational units in Indonesia, and strengthening student agency, namely the right and ability of learners to determine their learning process through setting learning goals, reflecting on their abilities, and taking steps proactively and responsibly for their success.

In line with this concept, teaching and learning activities in educational units that implement the Merdeka Curriculum must pay attention to the principles stated in the Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 56/M/2022 About Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in the context of Learning Recovery (Kemendikbud, 2022). The principles of an independent learning curriculum are as follows.

1. Learning must be in accordance with the conditions of the learners. This means that learning must be designed by paying attention to the development and abilities of students in accordance with the characteristics and learning needs of students so that teaching and learning activities become more meaningful. According to Susilowati (2022) when implementing this principle,

educators must analyze the background, conditions, stages of achievement and development of students as a basis for designing learning and assessment. So that educators do not directly apply teaching modules without looking at the needs of students and generalizing learning methods.

2. Learning is designed and implemented to build learners into lifelong learners. In this principle, educators must consider various stimuli that can be used in learning so as to give learners the opportunity to collaborate in providing sparking questions and teaching meaningful understanding (Susilowati, 2022).
3. Holistic principle. This means that the learning process supports the development of competencies and character of students holistically. The holistic principle encourages us to see meaningful relationships between components in the independent curriculum in project implementation such as students, educators, education units, communities, and the reality of everyday life (Hamzah, *et al.*, 2022). In this principle, educators must be able to use a variety of learning methods that we know as

differentiated learning. Differentiated learning is a teaching and learning process where students can learn subject matter according to their abilities, preferences, and needs so that they are not frustrated and feel like failures in their learning experience (Breux & Magee, 2010; Tomlinson, 2017). So that it can see various perspectives that support cognitive, social-emotional, spiritual, and project results of strengthening the Pancasila learner profile as a target in an independent curriculum that is reflected in students (Susilowati, 2022).

4. Learning that is relevant, meaning that the learning process designed must be in accordance with the context of learners' daily lives, both culture and values that exist in their environment. The use of context makes the learning experienced by students more meaningful and can have a positive impact on the learning process (Fajri, *et al.*, 2022).
5. Learning is oriented towards a sustainable future, meaning that learning must be meaningful and become a bridge in building understanding for learners to

become independent and free learners.

Through the Merdeka curriculum, education does not only focus on the academic abilities of students but can also develop the character building of students who become moral, polite, courteous, and ethical individuals through character education in accordance with the noble values of the Indonesian nation.

Character Education

In the process of education in schools not only focus on improving the quality and quality of education but also must create and foster character education in each student who is ethical and polite in social behavior according to the noble values of Pancasila.. Menurut Trimuliana, *et al* (2019) Character building through character education in schools is based on the consideration that character will not be formed just like that but with a long process through habituation.

Strengthening Character Education is implemented by applying the values of Pancasila. Character education includes religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence,

democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, communicative, peace-loving, fond of reading, environmental care, social care, and responsibility (Susilo, 2023). There are 5 main character values prioritized for Strengthening Character Education, including religious (reflecting faith in God); nationalist (putting the interests of the nation and state above the interests of self and group; independent (not dependent on others and using energy, thoughts, time to realize hopes, dreams, and ideals); gotong royong (reflecting actions to appreciate the spirit of cooperation and work together to solve common problems); and integrity (efforts to make himself a person who can always be trusted in words, actions, and work) (TIM, 2017).

The steps that educators can take in character education are to instill commendable attitudes in students, make students get to know each other, foster and build mutual respect and appreciation in behaving in society, character education can be in the form of reinforcement, imitation, exemplary, advice, and habituation by parents, teachers, peers, or elders (Nalle & Nahak, 2022; Khaironi, 2017).

The development of an independent curriculum is more flexible in the material as well as in developing the character and abilities of students. Character education in the independent curriculum is through project-based learning in accordance with the Pancasila learner profile to develop soft skills and character of students (Salmiyanti & Desyandri, 2023).

Character education can be implemented by incorporating character education values into various aspects of subjects, learning activities, local content, school culture, and extracurricular activities that contain various character values organized in society. In the independent curriculum, character education can be carried out through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5).

Project on Strengthening the Profile of Pancasila Students (P5) in Strengthening Character Education

The Pancasila student profile project aims to provide an overview of what the education system wants to achieve, namely the ability and character of students in accordance with the noble values of Pancasila.

All learning, programs, and activities in education units have the ultimate goal of profiling the Indonesian learner, so that educators and learners know what the education system expects of educational outcomes and strive to achieve them together (Susilo, 2023). The Pancasila Student Profile Project (P5) is useful as a guide for Indonesian educators and students in implementing the learning process.

The profile of Pancasila students in the independent curriculum was born from the contribution of the thoughts and ideals of the father of Indonesian education Ki Hadjar Dewantara regarding the education system in Indonesia. The alignment of the independent curriculum with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational concept emphasizes the happiness of students. Strengthening the character education of students will form into good characters if they are taught by teachers and are in a good environment. In the independent curriculum, the concept of happiness is applied in learning (Efendi, *et al.*, 2023) Includes:

1. Learning that is fun for students means that teachers can create a pleasant learning atmosphere for students, starting from the

selection of learning approaches, packaging of materials, and teacher attitudes during the learning process.

2. Student centered learning, means that students become the center of learning, the teacher as an intermediary and guide. Students are given the freedom to explore and become both the subject and object of learning.
3. The handling of deviant matters includes cases of intolerance, bullying and sexual violence.

Thus, the concept of happiness in the independent curriculum program aims to create a pleasant learning climate, a happy atmosphere for students and teachers so that education becomes meaningful because education not only creates students' competence in various fields but also fills the meaningfulness of their lives (Sherly, *et al.*, 2020).

Through the project of strengthening the Pancasila learner profile (P5) in the Merdeka curriculum, it can develop the character of students about tolerance and love for the nation and state through the cultivation of Pancasila values in the hope of building the character of students to be even better. The

Pancasila learner profile is a reflection of Indonesian students who excel with lifelong learning, character, global competence, and behave in accordance with the values of Pancasila, which is the main reference that guides education policy, including being a reference for teachers in building student character and competence (Nasution, *et al.*, 2023; Khusni, *et al.*, 2022; Susilawati, 2021; Widiyono & Millati, 2021; Wijaya, *et al.*, 2020).

The Pancasila learner profile has several dimensions which are concepts of the independent curriculum as a foundation in strengthening the character of students. These dimensions include:

1. Believing, fearing God Almighty, and having noble character. This dimension concerns the relationship between each learner's belief in God. Pancasila learners who have faith, devotion and noble character will understand the teachings of their religion and beliefs and apply this understanding in their daily lives, including morals of diversity, personal morals, morals to humans, morals to nature, and morals in the state (Susilo, 2023; Syafi'i, 2021).

2. Global diversity, which is a dimension to foster a feeling of respect for diversity or an attitude of tolerance towards differences. The value of global diversity is relevant to the value of tolerance, mutual respect and respect for differences as the value of character education (Jamaludin, *et al.*, 2022). Through this dimension, it is expected to create the character of learners who form mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors in viewing Indonesia's cultural diversity to be more directed and measurable and learners can view this global diversity as a beautiful thing so that an attitude of tolerance, inclusiveness, respect, and appreciation of diversity grows.
3. Gotong royong, this dimension creates the character of learners to help each other fellow living beings. The gotong royong dimension is the character value of helping each other in kindness, which is important to instill in children from an early age so that they are able to collaborate, care and cooperate with others in building relationships of give and take in order to achieve a common goal (Mutiarra, *et al.*, 2022; Sitompul, *et al.*, 2022; Santrock, 2017). Character education in the dimension of mutual cooperation in the learning process can be designed and pursued systematically with the aim of helping students understand their behavior in everyday life (Trimuliana, *et al.*, 2019).
4. Independent, in this dimension learners must be able to take responsibility for establishing goals in self-development and academic achievement for the learning process without depending on others. Independent learners always evaluate and are committed to continuing to develop themselves in order to adapt to the various challenges they face in accordance with changes and developments that occur in the local and global scope realistically, persistent, enterprising, have a strong commitment and are responsible for a process and its results (Irawati, *et al.*, 2022; Rosminda & Fadriati, 2023). The key elements in the independent dimension are (1) an understanding of awareness of self and the situation at hand; and (2) self-regulation (Rusnaini, *et al.*, 2021).

Being independent does not mean not needing others, but rather training yourself not to get used to relying on creatures that lead to disappointment (Susilo, 2023). If we always depend on others, it will be difficult to find solutions or solve the life problems we encounter, thus creating an attitude that is easily discouraged when encountering difficulties. Through this independent dimension, it will create a positive attitude of confidence in making ideas, arguments, and creativity.

5. Critical reasoning, means that learners are able to objectively process information very well, analyze and reason about the relationship between various information so that conclusions about the information are obtained. Critical reasoning skills are defined as a cognitive process in conducting specific and systematic analysis related to problems, accuracy in distinguishing problems, and identifying information to plan problem solving strategies (Azizah, *et al.*, 2018). The key elements in the critical reasoning dimension are (1) Obtaining and processing information and ideas;

(2) Analyzing and evaluating reasoning; (3) Reflecting and evaluating one's own thinking (Ernawati & Rahmawati, 2022; Triprastyo, 2022). The critical reasoning dimension is needed in every learner when looking for solutions to solve the daily life problems they face.

6. Creative, means that students are able to produce an original work and have its benefits. The key elements in the creative dimension are (1) Producing original ideas; (2) Producing original works and actions; (3) Having flexibility in thinking in finding alternative solutions to problems (Sherly, *et al.*, 2020). Through the creative dimension, learners are expected to get used to reasoning deeply, have a high learning determination, be productive, and never give up.

The merdeka curriculum focuses on improving the quality and quality of education academically and developing the character of students. Through the independent curriculum policy, students can develop themselves progressively by paying attention to the signs carefully and carefully which is good for the

education of students, so that the learning process becomes quality personally and as part of a member of society (Chamisijatin, *et al.*, 2022). The Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Project Program (P5) can be said to be more effective than the previous 2013 curriculum in developing character education and the personality of students based on the values and dimensions of the Pancasila learner profile. Learner character building is one of the main objectives of the education process in schools (Shoshani, 2018). So it can be understood that education is a place in shaping the character or personality of students who are in accordance with the values and culture of the nation.

D. Conclusion

The Merdeka curriculum has a different program from the previous curriculum, namely the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). The program has a role in shaping the personality and character of participants into moral, polite, courteous, and ethical individuals. This program has the main objective to maintain the noble values and

morals of the Indonesian nation. The Pancasila student profile has 6 dimensions as the concept of an Merdeka curriculum, namely: (1) Faithful, devoted to God Almighty, and noble; (2) Global diversity; (3) Mutual cooperation; (4) Independence; (5) Critical reasoning; and (6) Creativity.

The project program to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students is expected to realize graduates who prioritize character building and have the necessary abilities or skills in affirming the noble values of Pancasila. The values of Pancasila are not only to be understood, but it is important to be implemented in social life both in the family, community, and workplace. The Pancasila learner profile strengthening project program is a reflection of Indonesian students who excel as lifelong learners, have character, global competence, and behave in accordance with the values of Pancasila, which is the main reference that guides education policy, including being a reference for teachers in building the character and competence of students.

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