

## **COMPARISON OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Character education is currently an issue that is receiving serious attention from governments in various countries. The main focus of this discussion is human resource development through instilling character values. One of the education sectors that has implemented character education comprehensively, both in curriculum development and field activities, is basic education. Basic education institutions have a big responsibility in developing and implementing character education to advance national civilization. This character education is based on basic values that are rooted in community life, with the hope of producing quality individuals in all dimensions of their personality, especially in the educational context. This research aims to describe the comparison of character education in the elementary school curriculum between two countries, namely Indonesia and Malaysia. This research is library research, which was carried out using data collection techniques through reviewing books, literature, notes, and various reports related to the problem to be solved. Based on the analysis of various curriculum documents, it was found that both countries, Indonesia and Malaysia, have implemented character education both in the curriculum and in educational activities. There are similarities and differences between character education in the two countries, which can be seen from three main aspects: character education in the curriculum, character values in the curriculum, and strategies for implementing character education. Overall, character education in elementary schools has an important role in shaping individual character and advancing national civilization. Even though there are similarities between Indonesia and Malaysia in the implementation of character education, differences in character values and implementation strategies need to be looked at to understand the local context of each country. This research contributes to a further understanding of character development efforts in the context of basic education.*

*Keywords: character education, curriculum development, elementary school.*

## **ABSTRAK**

Pendidikan karakter saat ini menjadi isu yang mendapatkan perhatian serius dari pemerintah di berbagai negara. Fokus utama dari diskusi ini adalah pengembangan sumber daya manusia melalui penanaman nilai-nilai karakter. Salah satu sektor pendidikan yang telah menerapkan pendidikan karakter secara komprehensif, baik dalam pengembangan kurikulum maupun kegiatan lapangan, adalah pendidikan dasar. Institusi pendidikan dasar memiliki tanggung jawab besar dalam mengembangkan dan menerapkan pendidikan karakter untuk memajukan peradaban nasional. Pendidikan karakter ini berlandaskan pada nilai-nilai dasar yang bersumber dari kehidupan masyarakat, dengan harapan menghasilkan individu berkualitas dalam semua dimensi kepribadian mereka, terutama dalam konteks pendidikan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan perbandingan pendidikan karakter dalam kurikulum sekolah dasar antara dua negara, yaitu Indonesia dan Malaysia. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kepustakaan, dilakukan dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui tinjauan buku, literatur, catatan, dan berbagai laporan terkait masalah yang akan dipecahkan. Berdasarkan analisis berbagai dokumen kurikulum, ditemukan bahwa kedua negara, Indonesia dan Malaysia, telah menerapkan pendidikan karakter baik dalam kurikulum maupun kegiatan pendidikan. Terdapat kesamaan dan perbedaan antara pendidikan karakter di kedua negara, yang dapat dilihat dari tiga aspek utama: pendidikan karakter dalam kurikulum, nilai-nilai karakter dalam kurikulum, dan strategi pelaksanaan pendidikan karakter. Secara keseluruhan, pendidikan karakter di sekolah dasar memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk karakter individu dan memajukan peradaban nasional. Meskipun terdapat kesamaan antara Indonesia dan Malaysia dalam implementasi pendidikan karakter, perbedaan dalam nilai-nilai karakter dan strategi implementasi perlu diperhatikan untuk memahami konteks lokal masing-masing negara. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada pemahaman lebih lanjut tentang upaya pengembangan karakter dalam konteks pendidikan dasar.

Kata Kunci: pendidikan karakter, pengembangan kurikulum, sekolah dasar.

### **A. Introduction**

Character education has become the main focus in discussions in the world of education today. Governments in various countries consider character education to be a top priority,

recognizing the crucial role of character in the foundation of national and state life. Hidayati et al. (2014) define character education as a system that aims to develop students' character values, involving knowledge, awareness or will, and

actions applied in the context of religion, oneself, general society, and the environment, and as an integral part of national identity. In line with this, Agung (2011) emphasized that character education is an initiative deliberately designed to improve students' character in the educational context. One of the main goals of character education is to develop students' habits and behaviors that are commendable and in line with universal values and cultural traditions that have a religious dimension. This approach is directed at forming individuals who have positive character and are rooted in universal norms and religious values in the nation's cultural traditions.

Overall, character education plays an important role in the educational context. Systematic and deliberate application in developing students' character values is expected to be able to create individuals who have good character and are by the values upheld in society and national culture. Therefore, a deep understanding of the concept and objectives of character education needs to be the focus in efforts to improve the quality

of education at the national and international levels.

Efforts to obtain positive results in developing students' character in the future involve coaching, maintaining, and developing character. Law no. 20 Article 3 of 2003 concerning the National Education System emphasizes that the function of national education includes developing abilities and character formation of students, along with a dignified national civilization, to make the nation's life intelligent Hasbullah (2012). National education has a noble goal, namely developing students' potential to become individuals who are faithful, devout, have noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens.

Character education is implemented through 18 important values in the curriculum, such as religion, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democratic, curiosity, national spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, friendly or communicative, love of peace, and passion. reading, environmental

care, social care, and responsibility. The government, both at early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school levels, both private and state, is trying to implement these values in a character-based curriculum. Observations show that social problems often occur in elementary schools, such as violations of school rules, opposition to teachers, truancy, irregular student performance, and the negative influence of a free environment. This problem arises due to a lack of attention and supervision from the school, lack of discipline, and lack of implementation of Character Education.

In overcoming character problems in society, especially in the educational context, the importance of character education from an early age becomes clearer. Governments, including Indonesia and Malaysia, recognize the need to Strengthen Character Education (PPK) through the National Mental Revolution Movement (GNRM). PPK aims to strengthen students' character through the harmonization of heart, feeling, mind, and body, involving cooperation between educational

units, families, and society. This research aims to analyze the comparison of Character Education, especially in the elementary school curriculum in Indonesia and Malaysia. The analysis will focus on the character aspects and values contained in the education curriculum, as well as character education implementation strategies that may have similarities and differences between the two countries.

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Character Education in Indonesia**

Law Number 20 of 2003, Chapter II Article (3), outlines the goals of Indonesian education to develop student's potential to become individuals who believe, are devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and democratic and responsible citizens. The provision of education in Indonesia is managed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Primary and Secondary Education) and the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education (Higher Education). Over time, the Ministry of Education and

Culture became the main organizer for all levels of education.

The long history of the education curriculum in Indonesia has experienced several changes. The 2013 curriculum, according to Kaimuddi (2014), emphasizes the development of students' character. This is reflected in vertical and horizontal integration between subjects and levels of education, as well as the unification of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This integration can be seen in the organization of class-based core competencies involving KI-1 to KI-4.

The juridical basis for character education in Indonesia is regulated in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 20 of 2018 concerning Strengthening Character Education in formal education units. Article 1 paragraph (1) states that strengthening character education is a movement under the responsibility of the education unit to strengthen student character through harmonization of heart, feeling, thought, and sports with involvement and cooperation between the education unit, family, and community, as part of the

National Movement for Mental Revolution.

The Ministry of National Education (Hartono, 2014) formulated 18 character values originating from religion, Pancasila, culture, and national education goals. These values include religion, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationality, love of the homeland, respect for achievement, friendly/communication, love of peace, love of reading, environmental care, social care, And Responsibility. These values reflect the five main values, namely religiosity, nationalism, independence, cooperation, and integrity, which are integrated into the curriculum.

Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 20 of 2018 regulates approaches and methods for implementing strengthening character education in schools. Article 5 paragraph (3) stipulates that character strengthening in kindergarten is carried out through intracurricular activities; while at the primary and secondary education levels, it involves creative and

integrated intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. Article 6 emphasizes that the implementation of strengthening character education is carried out by optimizing the functions of three educational partners, namely class-based, school culture, and community.

### **Character Education in Malaysia**

The education system in Malaysia is under the responsibility of the federal government and covers all levels of education from pre-school to tertiary education. Primary education (pre-school to secondary education) is under the authority of the Malaysian Ministry of Education, while tertiary education is under the supervision of the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. The various types and levels of education in Malaysia involve preschool education, primary and secondary school education, advanced secondary education, tertiary education, and private education.

The Malaysian National Curriculum is an educational program that covers all aspects of knowledge, skills, norms, values, cultural elements, and beliefs. The

aim is to support students' holistic development in terms of physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional aspects, as well as fostering and enhancing the desired moral values. The Malaysian Ministry of Education divides the national curriculum into various types, including the early childhood care and education curriculum, the national preschool standard curriculum, the primary school integrated curriculum, the lower school standard curriculum, and the secondary school integrated curriculum.

Since 1983, the Malaysian government has made moral education mandatory for non-Muslim students, which is tested in final exams. Moral education for Muslim students is delivered through Islamic religious education subjects, while non-Muslim students receive moral education through moral education subjects. Initially, moral education was only implemented at the elementary school level but later developed into a subject in secondary schools with the adoption of the Integrated Middle School Curriculum.

A government committee in Malaysia formulated 16 pure values

to be taught to students, including kindness, independence, courtesy, respect, compassion, justice, freedom, courage, physical and mental health, honesty, diligence, cooperation, simplicity, gratitude, rational, and a spirit of cooperation. These values come from religious values, Pancasila, culture, and societal traditions, and include universal aspects that are relevant to everyday life and social relations.

Moral education in Malaysia is implemented through social interaction at school and outside school. Interaction at school occurs in the classroom learning process, with the application of direct learning methods. Teachers, as role models, are also involved in integrating moral values into other subjects. Moral education outside of school aims to provide situations that support students in applying moral values in everyday life. Even though there are teaching methods, such as memorization methods, there are challenges in implementing moral education in the classroom due to the lack of teacher capacity and skills to facilitate moral learning.

## **B. Research Methods**

This research adopts a Library Research approach as the type of research used. According to Sugiyono (2012), a literature study is a theoretical analysis, references, and scientific literature related to the culture, values, and norms that develop in the social situation being researched. This library research method is applied to formulate concepts that can be used as references in developing practical research steps. The steps in library research, according to Kuhlthau (2002), involve: (1) Selecting a topic, (2) Exploring information, (3) Determining the research focus, (4) Collecting data sources, (5) Preparing to present data, and (6) Preparation of reports.

Data sources or reference materials in this research include books, journals, and internet sites related to the research topic. Research data was obtained from various reference books and relevant journals related to character education in the elementary school curriculum in Indonesia and Malaysia.

The data collection technique used in this research is documentation, namely searching for

data through notes, books, papers, articles, journals, and other sources, as explained by Arikunto (2010). This research instrument involves a research material classification checklist, writing scheme/map, and research note format.

This research implements critical analysis techniques, which include the view that researchers are not value-free when assessing research. This critical analysis departs from certain views or values believed by the researcher. The researcher's alignment and position on a problem is the key to how text or data is interpreted. The critical paradigm places greater emphasis on interpretation because, through interpretation, researchers can understand the world contained in the text and respond to the meaning contained in it. This analysis was applied to analyze character education in the curricula of two countries, namely Indonesia and Malaysia, by reviewing character curriculum documents and relevant journals to obtain conclusions and essence from these sources.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

Character education is an integral aspect of the educational

curriculum, including values and implementation strategies aimed at developing the personality dimensions of students. In these two countries, character education has been integrated into various types and levels of education. Both countries, Indonesia and Malaysia, emphasize the importance of character education in the education curriculum. Character education includes aspects of values and norms that are applied to the learning process, aimed at forming individuals who are faithful, devout, and have noble character. The integration of these character values becomes an integral part of the curriculum, marking the government's commitment to building student character.

In both countries, the strategy for implementing character education does not only focus on theoretical aspects but also involves practical activities in the educational field. Implementation steps include developing a character curriculum, actively involving students in extracurricular activities, and instilling character values through various educational approaches.



A comparison of character education between Indonesia and Malaysia was carried out through analysis of character curriculum documents, by reviewing the similarities and differences in three main aspects: the existence of character education in the curriculum, the character values applied, and the strategy for implementing character education. The results of this analysis are the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of character education in both countries.

Character education in the elementary school curriculum in Indonesia and Malaysia shows the government's commitment to building student character. Even though there are differences in implementation, character values applied, and character education strategies, both have the same goal, namely creating a generation that has integrity and contributes positively to society. This can be seen in the table below:

NO	ASPECT	INDONESIA	MALAYSIA
1	Character Education in the Curriculum	In Indonesia, character education is an educational movement organized by schools (educational units) to strengthen students' character. The implementation of character education through the harmonization of heart, feeling, thought, and sports involving schools, families, and communities is an integrated part of the national movement for mental revolution. The 2013 curriculum currently in effect	In Malaysia, character education is provided in the form of moral education and religious education. Moral education is given to non-Muslim students when Muslim students study Islamic religious lessons. Through the implementation of the Integrated School Curriculum, moral education is carried out in elementary to middle schools.

		in Indonesia is oriented towards character education. In the 2013 curriculum, there is vertical and horizontal integration between subjects and levels of education, integration between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The integration of subjects and the realm of achieving learning objectives are included in the core competency design which includes KI-1 to KI-4.	
2	Character Values in the Curriculum	In Indonesia, the values in the curriculum were formulated by the Ministry of National Education in 2014, namely religious, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democratic, curiosity, nationality, love of the country, respect for achievement, friendly/communicative, loves peace, likes reading, cares about the environment, cares about society, responsibility. Then in	Malaysia has implemented 16 values in character education. These values are pure. These 16 values include kindness, independence, high morals (good manners), respect, compassion, justice, freedom, courage, physical and mental health, honesty, diligence, cooperation, simplicity, gratitude, rationality, and enthusiasm. cooperation. These pure values are

		Minister of Education and Culture Regulation number 20 of 2018, it is stated that character education is based on Pancasila values. These values are religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, working hard, creative, independent, democratic, curiosity, national spirit, love of the country, respect for achievements, communication, love of peace, love of reading, environmental care, social care, and responsibility. These values are integrated into the educational curriculum.	derived from religious values, traditions, and community habits. In development, the 16 values were revised into 7 values, namely values related to self-development, values related to family, values related to the natural environment, values related to patriotism, values related to human rights, values related to democracy, and values related to security and harmony
3	Strategy for Implementing Character Education in the Curriculum	<p>a. In Indonesia, the implementation of character education by optimizing the function of educational partners is carried out using a class, school culture, and community-based approach.</p> <p>b. Class-based character education is implemented by integrating the values in the curriculum document (RPP), in the learning</p>	<p>a. Values education in Malaysia is carried out through social interaction methods at school and outside school.</p> <p>b. Character education through interaction at school is carried out in a direct learning process, both by moral education teachers and by class teachers.</p> <p>c. Moral character</p>

		<p>process and assessment.</p> <p>c. Character education through school culture is carried out with habits, examples, school regulations, or norms.</p> <p>d. Character education is carried out by involving school committees, potentials, and various community environmental programs.</p> <p>e. Character education in kindergarten is carried out through intracurricular activities.</p> <p>f. Meanwhile, at the primary and secondary education levels, it is implemented through extracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities which are carried out creatively and integrated.</p>	<p>education outside of school is carried out by creating concrete/real situations to apply moral values.</p>
4	Similarities in Character Education in the Elementary School Curriculum	<p>a. Character education in both countries has become an integral part of the educational curriculum in schools. The curriculum of both countries has placed character education in educational planning, implementation and assessment.</p> <p>b. Character education in both countries is based on the values that underlie the life of that country. Malaysia bases its character education on moral and religious</p>	

		<p>education. Meanwhile, the Indonesian state bases its character education on the values contained in its Pancasila.</p> <p>c. Character education strategies or methods in both countries involve schools, families and communities. Character education is designed to be more integrated with school subjects.</p>	
5	Differences in Character Education in the Elementary School Curriculum	<p>a. Character education is regulated by the Government through the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>b. Character education in this case involves 3 parties, namely school, family and community.</p> <p>c. Character education is not based on religion but on the nation's ideology, namely Pancasila.</p> <p>d. Religious values are contained in school character education in Indonesia, developing character education in the form of curriculum documents as well as in implementation and assessment in accordance with the moral values (core values) that underlie the philosophy of elementary school education.</p>	<p>Character education is provided in the form of moral education and religious education. This means that moral and religious values are the emphasis and priority of character education in Malaysia. It is understandable that Islam is the priority religion of the Malaysian state. Apart from implementing the Integrated Middle School Curriculum, the implementation of character education in Malaysia is prioritized in primary and secondary education.</p>

		<p>e. The 2013 curriculum is a continuation of the previous curriculum which aims to prepare Indonesian students to have the ability to live as good individuals and citizens who are faithful, productive, creative, innovative and effective.</p> <p>able to contribute to the life of society, nation, state and world civilization.</p>	
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Based on the data presented, it can be explained that Character Education in the Curriculum between Indonesia and Malaysia has several significant differences and similarities. In Indonesia, character education is integrated into the curriculum to strengthen students' character at school. The implementation of character education is carried out through the harmonization of heart, feeling, thought, and sports, involving schools, families, and communities as part of the National Movement for Mental Revolution. The 2013 curriculum shows vertical and horizontal integration between subjects and educational levels, with a focus on developing core learning competencies.

In Malaysia, character education is provided in the form of moral education and religious education, with moral education being presented to non-Muslim students when Muslim students study Islamic religious lessons. The implementation of the Integrated Middle School Curriculum shows that moral education is implemented in elementary to middle schools.

Both countries have character values listed in the curriculum. In Indonesia, these values were formulated by the Ministry of National Education in 2014, mainly based on Pancasila. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, there are 16 pure values which were later revised into 7 values related to self-development, kinship, the natural

environment, patriotism, human rights, democracy, and security and harmony.

The strategy for implementing character education in both countries has also gone well. In Indonesia, the strategy involves educational partner functions with a class-based approach, school culture, and community. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, implementation is carried out through social interaction methods inside and outside school and involves moral education teachers and class teachers.

The similarities between the two countries lie in the integration of character education into the school curriculum, involving active participation from schools, families, and communities. However, the striking difference is that Indonesia places more emphasis on Pancasila values without being based on religion, while Malaysia places more emphasis on moral and Islamic religious education as the basis of character.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Education has a significant impact on improving the quality and

social behavior of society because education is a key element in the process of personality change and individual self-development. The implementation of character education in formal education environments, especially at the basic education level, has a very effective influence in shaping the character of elementary school students, in line with forming and developing national character.

In a comparison of character education in the basic education curriculum of the two countries, namely Indonesia and Malaysia, it can be seen that character education has become an integral component in curriculum development, both as part of the curriculum document and in its implementation in the classroom. The two countries show similarities and differences, both in terms of character values and strategies for implementing character education. However, what is important in this context is the awareness in both countries of the importance of character education for the younger generation, which is reflected in the implementation of educational programs in each country.

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