

## CHARACTER EDUCATION AS AN INTEGRATION OF THE INDEPENDENT LEARNING CURRICULUM IN SD NEGERI NAPIS IV TAMBAKREJO BOJONEGORO

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine and analyze the types of character education that are integrated in the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri Napis IV, Tambakrejo District, Bojonegoro Regency. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with a literature review method that focuses on the concept, implementation and challenges of character education in the curriculum. The research results show that some of the main character values taught include religiosity, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, independence and love of the country. These values are integrated through project-based learning methods, routine school activities such as flag ceremonies, and application in various subjects. The implementation of character education shows a positive impact on students' moral, social and academic development, although there are still challenges, such as lack of teacher training and parental involvement. This research recommends increasing training for teachers and supporting better facilities to optimize the implementation of character education in the Independent Curriculum.

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dan menganalisis jenis-jenis pendidikan karakter yang diintegrasikan dalam Kurikulum Merdeka di SD Negeri Napis IV Kecamatan Tambakrejo, Kabupaten Bojonegoro. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-deskriptif dengan metode literature review yang berfokus pada konsep, implementasi, dan tantangan pendidikan karakter dalam kurikulum. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa beberapa nilai karakter utama yang diajarkan meliputi religiusitas, disiplin, tanggung jawab, kerja sama, kemandirian, dan cinta tanah air. Nilai-nilai ini diintegrasikan melalui metode pembelajaran berbasis proyek, kegiatan rutin sekolah seperti upacara bendera, dan penerapan dalam berbagai mata pelajaran. Implementasi pendidikan karakter ini memperlihatkan dampak positif terhadap perkembangan moral, sosial, dan akademik siswa, meskipun masih terdapat tantangan, seperti kurangnya pelatihan guru dan keterlibatan orang tua. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan peningkatan pelatihan bagi guru serta dukungan fasilitas yang lebih baik untuk mengoptimalkan penerapan pendidikan karakter dalam Kurikulum Merdeka.

**Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Karakter, Kurikulum Merdeka, Integrasi Kurikulum, Nilai-Nilai Karakter.

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## Introduction

Character education is an important element in the world of education which not only focuses on the transfer of knowledge, but also on the formation of a strong and moral personality. (Sunarya et al., 2019). In the era of globalization and rapid technological development, the challenge of educating students to have good character is increasing (Seliro Wangi & Wajdi, 2022). This encourages the Indonesian government to strengthen character education at all levels, including elementary schools, as an effort to create a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has high moral integrity.

Character education has become a strategic issue in the development of the national education system, especially in facing the challenges of globalization, technological developments and increasingly complex moral crises. (Marzuqi et al., 2022). In the midst of fast social dynamics, students not only need intellectual skills, but also strong moral abilities to form positive behavior and attitudes (Rohim & Rofiki, 2024). Therefore, character education is a fundamental component that must be fully integrated into every level of education.

In line with the spirit of Merdeka Belajar, a policy initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, character education is expected to be optimally integrated into the curriculum. The Merdeka Belajar policy gives schools, teachers and students the freedom to develop a more flexible learning process, according to their individual potential and needs. The integration of character education in the Merdeka Curriculum not only emphasizes cognitive aspects, but also affective and psychomotor aspects of students, thereby producing individuals who have noble, independent and responsible character.

The Independent Learning Policy launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology opens up great opportunities for schools to innovate in creating a more student-centered learning process. One of the key elements in the Merdeka Curriculum is the integration of character education in every aspect of learning, which emphasizes the formation of students' personality, morality and independence. SD Negeri Napis IV, Tambakrejo District, Bojonegoro Regency, as one of the institutions that implements the Independent Curriculum, views the importance of implementing holistic character education in order to produce a young generation who is not only intelligent, but also has good morals and social responsibility.

SD Negeri Napis IV Tambakrejo District Bojonegoro Regency is one of the schools that implements the Independent Learning Curriculum as a guide in the learning process. In this context, it is important to evaluate how character education is integrated in the curriculum and the extent to which it has an impact on the formation of student attitudes and behavior. Character education at SD Negeri Napis IV is expected to be able to provide provisions for students to face the challenges of everyday life and prepare them to become responsible citizens with integrity.

However, the implementation of character education in schools is not free from challenges. Some of the challenges that are often faced include limited resources, differences in teachers' understanding of the concept of character, and a lack of synergy between schools, families and communities in supporting student character formation. Therefore, this research aims to analyze how character education is integrated in the Independent Learning Curriculum at SD Negeri Napis IV, as well as to identify factors that influence the effectiveness of its implementation.

The urgency of this research is based on the need for a deeper understanding of strategies and models for implementing effective character education, especially at the elementary school level. In addition, it is hoped that the results of this research can provide practical recommendations for schools and stakeholders in optimizing character education as an integral part of the Independent Learning Curriculum. Ultimately, this research will make a significant contribution to the development of holistic and sustainable character education at

SD Negeri Napis IV and other elementary schools.

The novelty of this research lies in the contextual analysis regarding the implementation of character education in elementary schools with specific socio-cultural backgrounds in Bojonegoro Regency. Most previous research focused on implementing character education in urban or regional schools with more adequate facilities. This research will highlight how schools in areas with limited resources can adopt the principles of the Independent Curriculum in shaping student character, as well as identify innovative strategies implemented by educators in overcoming the obstacles they face.

In addition, this research is expected to make a practical contribution by offering a model for implementing character education that is adaptive and appropriate to school conditions in rural areas. The results will provide new insights for education policy makers, school principals and teachers in developing more effective strategies for integrating character education as an integral part of the learning process in the Merdeka Belajar era.

Thus, this research has high urgency in supporting improving the quality of character education holistically and becoming a reference for developing educational policies that are more inclusive and oriented to student needs in various local contexts.

## Method

The research entitled "Character Education as an Integration of the Independent Learning Curriculum at SD Negeri Napis IV, Tambakrejo District, Bojonegoro Regency" uses descriptive qualitative methods. This approach was chosen to understand in depth how character education is integrated in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum at SD Negeri Napis IV. The aim of this research is to describe the implementation process, challenges faced, and solutions implemented in character education in schools.

The subjects of this research included school principals, teachers, students and parents at SD Negeri Napis IV, Tambakrejo District. Subject selection was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, where informants were selected based on their involvement and role in the implementation of character education in schools.

It is hoped that this research method can provide a comprehensive and in-depth picture of how character education is integrated into the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri Napis IV, as well as contributing to the development of more effective character education practices in elementary schools.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. *Types of Character Education in the Independent Curriculum*

Based on the results of a literature review conducted by researchers, there are several types of main character values that are the focus of character education in the Independent Curriculum, (Ihsan, 2019), including:

a. Religiosity

Religiosity is a complex integration of religious knowledge and feelings religion and religious actions within a person (Rahmawati, 2016). The value of religiosity includes cultivating a spiritual attitude, including developing awareness of God, praying before and after activities, and applying religious teachings in daily life. In the Merdeka Curriculum, this value is integrated through Religious Education lessons as well as daily activities such as group prayer and religious activities at school.

b. Integrity

Integrity is the truth and honesty of a person's disciplinary actions (Mubin, 2018). Integrity character education aims to form students who are honest, dare to admit mistakes, and are responsible for their actions. This value is integrated in various subjects and activities, as students are asked to always provide original and responsible work in every assignment given.

c. Discipline

Discipline is one of the means of forming an orderly personality in doing things (Pratiwi, 2020). Disciplined character education is integrated through managing study time, completing assignments on time, and regularity in participating in school activities. This value is reinforced by school rules that encourage discipline, such as punctual attendance and compliance with class rules.

d. Independence

In the Independent Curriculum, students are encouraged to become more independent in the learning process, including in making decisions and completing assignments. Independence education is developed through assignments that require students to work individually or in groups without being too dependent on the teacher.

e. Mutual cooperation

The value of mutual cooperation is taught through collaboration in group projects, extracurricular activities, and social activities. Students are invited to work together to complete group assignments, clean the school environment, and be involved in social service activities.

f. Nationality

National character education includes love of the homeland, patriotism, and respect for state symbols. At SD Negeri Napis IV, this value is instilled through flag ceremonies, PPKn lessons, and other activities that foster a sense of nationalism among students.

## 2. *Implementation of Character Education in the Independent Curriculum*

The implementation of character education at SD Negeri Napis IV has been carried out in an integrated manner in various aspects of learning. The approach used in the Merdeka Curriculum supports teacher efficiency in being flexible in implementing character values in each subject.

*First*, in practice at SDN Napis IV, Bojonegoro Regency, project-based learning is implemented as an effective method for instilling character values, such as the values of responsibility and cooperation. Students are asked to work on group projects related to local or social issues, such as keeping the environment clean or culturally based projects.

*Second*, implementing habituation activities at school, such as praying together before and after learning activities, reading before lessons, or Duha prayers are a medium for strengthening values such as discipline, mutual cooperation and religiosity.

*Third*, integration in subjects to make the character education program a success at the Napis IV Elementary School. Every subject, be it science, social studies, Indonesian or religious education, has integrated character values in a contextual way, for example through discussions of environmental ethics in science lessons or through folklore which emphasizes the value of virtue in Indonesian lessons.

## 3. *Character Education Implementation Strategy*

Implementation of character education in the Independent Curriculum requires an innovative and interdisciplinary approach. Some of the strategies implemented at SD Negeri Napis IV Bojonegoro Regency in making the character education program a success are as follows:

a. *Project-Based Learning*

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is an instructional technique in which meaningful tasks, often in the form of problems, serve as context and stimulus for building

knowledge and critical thinking. Students work in teams to set goals, obtain information, and make decisions (Ariani, 2017). This learning allows students to apply character values in real world contexts, for example environmental projects that involve students in mutual cooperation, cooperation and responsibility activities. This approach is an approach with real action that is jointly implemented by teachers and students at SD Negeri Napis IV. The entire school community at SD Negeri Napis IV without exception supports each other so that the character education program can run successfully.

b. *Value-Based Approach*

This approach views quality in terms of value and price with attention *trade off* between performance and price, quality is defined as *affordable excellent* (Makinuddin, 2019). Implementation of this approach where teachers consciously integrate discussions of moral values in daily learning activities. Integrating values in each lesson is a relevant method so that students get used to and know the basics of values applied at SD Negeri Napis IV.

c. *Role modeling by teachers and school staff*

The definition of a role model is someone whose behavior we can imitate (Rifayanti et al., 2019). This approach focuses on teachers not only teaching character values, but also being role models in implementing these values in everyday life at school. The implementation of this approach is that teachers at SD Negeri Napis IV are required to behave politely towards fellow teachers, parents, guardians, and towards students. It is hoped that this will be an example for students that the highest value in learning is mutual respect and courtesy towards other people. The basis of this role model is to emphasize each teacher first by providing periodic evaluations related to the performance and values established at SD Negeri Napis IV. The values that have been agreed to be taught to students must be implemented first by each teacher before being taught to students.

#### 4. *Challenges in Implementing Character Education*

Even though there are clear strategies and programs to integrate character education in the Independent Curriculum, implementing character education at SD Negeri Napis IV shows that there are several challenges that often arise, namely:

a. *Limited training for teachers*

Teachers in elementary schools do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to implement character education optimally. The Independent Curriculum provides freedom in teaching methods, but many teachers are still not specifically trained to convey character values through interactive learning.

b. *Lack of parental and community involvement*

Character education will be more effective if it is supported by the family and community environment. However, some literature states that in some areas, such as in Tambakrejo District, parental involvement in supporting character education is still limited.

c. *Availability of facilities*

Schools located in rural areas often face limited facilities that can support project-based learning activities and other character education activities. This can be an obstacle in implementing an ideal character education program.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of the study in this research, it can be concluded that the integration of character education in the Independent Curriculum at SD Negeri Napis IV is going well through a comprehensive approach. Several types of character education such as religiosity, discipline, cooperation, responsibility, independence and nationality have been implemented systematically in learning activities and school routines.

This research shows that character education is integrated in all subjects through project-based learning methods and collaborative activities, as well as routine school activities such as flag ceremonies and group prayers. The effectiveness of implementing character education depends on teacher training, parent involvement, and support from the surrounding community. Challenges in implementing character education include limited facilities, as well as a lack of teacher training and family involvement, which need to be addressed immediately to strengthen students' overall character development.

Overall, the integration of character education in the Merdeka Curriculum at SD Negeri Napis IV has shown a positive impact on students' moral and social development. However, improvements in training, facilities and parental involvement are needed to achieve more optimal results.

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