
	Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam P-ISSN: 14110881 E-ISSN: 25414534 Vol. 27, No. 2, 2026, pp. 629–640 https://doi.org/10.23917/profetika.v27i02.12879	
	Received September 14, 2025	

Integrating SDGs Values in Education: Comparing Cognitive and Character Emphases in the 2013 and Merdeka Curricula

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to compare the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum in terms of their integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) values, with particular attention to the balance between cognitive development and character education. **Theoretical framework:** The study is grounded in the theoretical perspective that sustainable education requires the integration of cognitive competencies, ethical values, and transformative character to prepare learners for the social, economic, and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century. **Literature review:** Previous studies have highlighted the importance of curriculum reform for promoting sustainable development; however, most have examined either the 2013 Curriculum or the Merdeka Curriculum independently, leaving limited comparative evidence regarding their respective contributions to SDGs-oriented education. **Method:** This research employs a qualitative content analysis using official curriculum documents as the primary data source. The analysis focuses on curriculum objectives, learning outcomes, competency standards, and character development frameworks related to SDGs principles. **Results:** The findings reveal that the 2013 Curriculum places greater emphasis on cognitive achievement through structured competency-based learning and measurable academic outcomes. In contrast, the Merdeka Curriculum prioritizes character formation through the *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5), encouraging critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, responsibility, and sustainability awareness that closely align with the principles of the SDGs. Nevertheless, each curriculum demonstrates limitations when implemented independently. The 2013 Curriculum provides less flexibility for contextual and character-oriented learning, whereas the Merdeka Curriculum requires stronger academic integration to ensure balanced cognitive achievement. Therefore, a comprehensive integration of the cognitive strengths of the 2013 Curriculum with the character-oriented approach of the Merdeka Curriculum is recommended to develop graduates who are academically competent, ethically responsible, and capable of contributing to sustainable development. **Implications:** The study implies that future curriculum policies should harmonize academic excellence and character education as complementary dimensions of SDGs implementation. **Novelty:** Its novelty lies in presenting a systematic comparative framework that explicitly connects Indonesia's two national curricula with SDGs values through the dual perspectives of cognitive competence and character development.

Keywords: sdgs values, 2013 curriculum, merdeka curriculum, character education, comparative analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are global development pacts that seek to remove development barriers and achieve sustainable development. Four categories, economic, social, institutional, and environmental, are used to classify sustainable development goals. There are 17 main goals of the SDGs, including 1) zero poverty; 2) no hunger; 3) healthy and prosperous life; 4) quality education; 5) gender equality; 6) clean water and proper sanitation; 7) clean and affordable energy; 8) decent jobs and economic growth; 9) industry, innovation, and infrastructure; 10) reduced gaps; 11) sustainable cities and settlements; 12) responsible consumption and production; 13) handling climate change; 14) ocean ecosystems; 15) terrestrial ecosystems; 16) peace, justice, and resilient institutions; 17) partnerships to achieve goals [1].

The fourth SDG, high-quality education, is one of the key goals. Education that can provide an efficient, relevant, and well-rounded learning experience to all students is referred to as quality education. In addition to imparting knowledge, this kind of education aims to help students develop their abilities, values, and attitudes so that they can contribute positively to society and the workplace [1]. A curriculum that prioritizes holistic learning, 21st-century skills development, and encouragement for critical and creative thinking is an essential element of high-quality education [2].

Education has a crucial role in efforts to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [3]. The first step in achieving the SDGs is education. This is because education gives birth to talented individuals who will ultimately bring positive change. Education in this context is seen not only as an end goal, but also as a means to achieve other goals, including poverty alleviation (SDG 1), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work (SDG 8), and sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12) [4].

Poverty eradication, high-quality education, gender equality, inequality reduction, environmental conservation, and climate change are some of the 17 interrelated goals that make up the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this regard, schools play a crucial role in ensuring that sustainability principles are widely accepted and taught [5]. A strategic step to equip future generations with knowledge and skills in dealing with global issues is to integrate sustainable principles into the education system. Students' character can be formed to care for the environment and social welfare through education that integrates the ideas of sustainable development. Instilling moral principles and a sense of global responsibility in future generations is another vital function of education. Thus, students' ability to make constructive contributions to society and the wider world can be strengthened by incorporating sustainable development into the curriculum [6].

Education can help create a generation that is aware of global problems and able to provide sustainable solutions by incorporating the values of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the curriculum. To improve the standard of education, Indonesia has implemented several policies and programs. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum is one of the efforts that contributes to the development of an education system that is more adaptable and can be adapted to the needs of students [3]. The SDGs and the Independent Curriculum are in line, especially the fourth goal, which emphasizes high-quality education. Students can actively participate and develop greater awareness of social and environmental issues through project-based learning [3].

To understand the advantages of the independent curriculum, it is necessary to compare it with the previous curriculum, namely the 2013 Curriculum. The previous 2013 curriculum emphasised the integration of student competencies contextually, although the Independent Curriculum provides flexibility and relevance in learning. The 2013 curriculum covers the areas of attitude, skill, and knowledge competencies, as well as improving and balancing *hard and soft skills*. Meanwhile, the Independent Curriculum is the government's latest effort to add flexibility and relevance in education. In the 2013 Curriculum, the development of student competencies through

contextual and integrated learning is emphasized more. However, the Independent Curriculum offers a more adaptive and flexible approach, allowing schools to tailor the curriculum according to the needs of the local community and the abilities of their students [7]. The Independent Curriculum applies differentiated learning, while the K13 Curriculum adopts a scientific approach [8]. The 2013 curriculum focuses on high-level thinking skills and is predominantly in the cognitive domain [9]. However, the K13 Curriculum has not clearly integrated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), based on the characteristics of these two curricula. Through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), the Independent Curriculum has integrated the SDGs into the learning process. In line with the SDGs, this project provides students with the opportunity to gain knowledge through hands-on experience in a real-world environment [4].

The main focus of this study is to analyze and comparatively examine the policy orientation of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum in relation to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A comparative study was carried out in this study to provide input on the development of the next national curriculum based on data and analysis of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum. Thus, results will be obtained in the form of a national curriculum orientation to optimize the results or outputs of the curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of SDGs and Its Relevance to Education

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 as a global agenda aimed at eradicating poverty, preserving the environment, and ensuring prosperity for all of humanity by 2030. Economic, social, and environmental aspects are covered by 169 interconnected goals and 17 key goals [10]. The principles of the SDGs must be incorporated into the curriculum and learning process to guarantee that students have not only cognitive abilities but also social awareness, environmental ethics, and a spirit of global collaboration [11].

Cognitive and Character Aspects in Education

The Latin word "*cogitare*", which means "to think", is the origin of the word "cognitive". The Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI) defines cognitive as everything related to the process of cognition, which is mental activity that includes knowledge or is based on truths that can be objectively verified. The term "cognitive" comes from the Latin word *cogitare*, which means to think. Cognitive theory is a learning theory in the field of education that emphasizes how the learning process involves managing various components of cognition and perception in order to gain a deeper understanding [12].

Meanwhile, the character education program based on the Pancasila Student Profile aims to develop Indonesian students into lifelong learners who not only have global competence but also act in accordance with the ideals of Pancasila. The profile is manifested in six main dimensions, namely faith, fear of God Almighty and noble character; respect for global diversity; upholding the spirit of cooperation; independent; have the ability to reason critically; and creative. [13].

2013 Curriculum and Independent Curriculum

One of the important aspects of the 2013 curriculum is the development of social and spiritual attitudes as well as knowledge and skills used in society and in the classroom. As part of society, schools help students develop the skills and knowledge they need to apply in their communities and make the most of them [14]. Among its many goals, the Independent Curriculum aims to maximize student potential, close learning gaps, and make learning fun. For all participants in the learning process, the curriculum also offers flexibility [14].

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research is qualitative content analysis. The goal of the content analysis research approach is to derive credible conclusions from the text (or other important material) in its context [15].

Therefore, the researcher conducted research to analyze the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum. The 2013 Curriculum Document and the Independent Curriculum are the data sources for analysis. This research also utilizes journal articles that help and support the analysis of the content of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum [15].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emphasis on Cognitive and Character Aspects in the 2013 Curriculum

Based on the level of education, the structure of the 2013 Curriculum is intended to regulate subjects, learning materials, learning loads, core skills, and basic competencies [16]. This curriculum emphasizes the balance of three main domains, namely behavior, knowledge, and skills. Each core ability has a different focus: KI-1 is related to the improvement of spiritual attitudes, KI-2 is focused on social attitudes, KI-3 is focused on knowledge mastery, and KI-4 is focused on practical skills [17]. The content of the 2013 Curriculum is methodically structured to help students acquire abilities that meet their demands in the modern world, in addition to providing knowledge [18]. In addition, the learning process in the 2013 Curriculum uses a thematic-integrative approach combined with scientific methods [19].

At its core, the goal of thematical-integrative learning is to combine a wide range of subject competencies into a single topic that encompasses all subjects [19]. In order for the knowledge gained not to be fragmented by disciplinary boundaries, this model allows students to learn in a more realistic atmosphere, closer to everyday life. Therefore, education will be able to support students' growth in the cognitive (knowledge), emotional (attitude), and psychomotor (skills) domains in a balanced and well-rounded way [19].

One of the main elements of the 2013 curriculum is the development of student competencies through integrative and contextual learning approaches [7]. The development of student competencies through an integrative and contextual learning process is the main component of the 2013 Curriculum. This method is rooted in the philosophy of constructivism, which states that knowledge is actively created by students through interaction with their surroundings and educational experiences, rather than being passively transmitted from teacher to student. This means that learning activities now focus on real-world applications that prepare students to handle everyday challenges while promoting learning independence rather than memorizing topics [7].

In addition to requiring students to understand fundamental information, the thematic-integrative approach in learning also places a strong emphasis on understanding how ideas from different subjects relate to each other [18]. In this case, knowledge is seen as a single entity that can be applied in everyday life [20]. The active participation of students is essential in the learning process. Students are encouraged to actively participate, learn, and expand their knowledge through practical experience [21]. Students can practice solving problems while internalizing the importance of the new information they acquire because the basic principle of this technique is learning by doing .. In addition, the goal of thematical-integrative learning is to create a joyful and meaningful *learning environment*. In these situations, educators play an important role in creating learning experiences that incorporate the sociocultural values and character that exist in the students' surrounding environment, in addition to acting as facilitators of knowledge [21].

Through a thematic-integrative approach, the 2013 Curriculum, which has been implemented gradually since 2013, aims to develop students who are analytical, creative,

and virtuous in addition to improving academic achievement [18]. The ability of students to live their faith in accordance with their beliefs is an example of a spiritual component, while the social dimension includes more general qualities such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, politeness, concern for the environment, and confidence in social situations. Character education in the 2013 Curriculum is incorporated into various aspects of education, including extracurricular activities, school culture, learning processes, and local content, rather than just limited to specific topics [22]. Incorporating character into education also helps students' personal development and equips them to face a wide range of global challenges [18].

Strengthening character values in the 2013 Curriculum is carried out through the implementation of the Character Education Strengthening (PPK) program in the 2013 Curriculum. By emphasizing specific principles that will be the focus of learning, understanding, appreciation, and practice, this program aims to instil the values of nation-building massively and effectively through educational institutions. The internalization of Pancasila values, namely religious, integrity, tolerance, discipline, work ethic, creativity, independence, democratic, curious, national spirit, love for the homeland, respect for achievements, communication skills, love of peace, literacy culture, environmental and social care, and responsible attitudes, are the main focuses in the Character Strengthening Profile (PPK). PPK values are incorporated into extracurricular activities, such as Scouting, intracurricular activities, and co-curriculars, as well as into daily routines to maintain school infrastructure and facilities. PPK activities are included in the curriculum, especially in the lesson plan and at the beginning of learning [23].

The 2013 curriculum is prepared as an integrated system that balances the dimensions of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, through the application of core competencies that include the spiritual, social, cognitive, and applicative domains. Through a thematic-integrative approach combined with scientific methods, students are encouraged to actively build knowledge through real experiences so that learning becomes more contextual, meaningful, and fun. This curriculum is also based on constructivism, which emphasises *learning by doing* to train independence, problem-solving, and creativity. In addition to academic achievements, the 2013 Curriculum pays great attention to character education by integrating Pancasila values into intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities through the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) program. Thus, this curriculum not only produces intellectually intelligent students, but also noble character, critical, creative, and ready to face global challenges.

Emphasis on Cognitive and Character Aspects in the Independent Curriculum

An innovative education policy that allows schools to have more flexibility to adapt teaching to local needs and student characteristics is the Independent Learning Curriculum. This approach no longer emphasizes uniformity, but rather gives the educational unit the freedom to design a curriculum that is relevant to its context [24]. Thus, this curriculum is seen as a strategic step to answer the increasingly complex educational challenges, while keeping the learning process close to the reality of students. In addition to flexibility, the Independent Curriculum is also designed to provide more meaningful learning with a focus on students as the main subject. That way, the educational process is not only uniform but also more adaptive to the diversity of students [7], [25]. One of the keys of the Independent Curriculum is the concept of differentiation of learning [26].

Differentiated learning is an approach that seeks to accommodate and respect the diversity of students by adjusting the learning process according to the needs and learning styles of each student. Teachers no longer emphasize uniformity in using this method, but rather provide opportunities for each student to get learning services tailored to their needs and interests. Thus, differentiation not only serves as a teaching strategy but also as a form of recognition of the uniqueness of each individual in the learning process [24].

The Independent Curriculum gives educators more freedom to tailor their learning plans to the needs of students. This flexibility affects teachers' ability to be more creative in developing new and successful teaching strategies, as well as making them more appropriate to students' stages of cognitive growth. Greater flexibility allows teachers to modify their methods to make the learning process more relevant and contextual. For students, this flexibility encourages higher motivation to learn because they are allowed to express ideas, explore their potential, and develop skills according to their interests. The learning process is no longer seen as a rigid routine, but rather as an experience that encourages exploration and self-discovery [25].

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum through a *project-based learning* (PjBL) strategy has been proven to have a significant impact on the development of students' cognitive aspects [27]. With the help of this model, students are positioned as active participants in their education, receiving instruction on how to discover, evaluate, and apply knowledge in an authentic environment. The active involvement is in line with the formulation of Learning Outcomes (CP) and Learning Objectives (TP), which emphasize the development of higher-level thinking skills [28].

Learning Objectives (TP) derived from Learning Outcomes (CP) are designed to encourage learning activities that train students' reflective thinking skills. For example, students are invited to observe sustainable living practices in the surrounding environment, compile a report on the results of observations, and then reflect on concrete steps that can be taken to support global development goals [28]. This kind of activity facilitates the process of *deep thinking*, which is characteristic of high-level cognitive reinforcement as reflected at the C4-C6 level in Bloom's Taxonomy [29]. In addition, the project-based learning process also requires the active involvement of students in discussions, decision-making, and problem-solving based on the data and information they obtain throughout the project activities [30].

The Independent Curriculum is designed as a more flexible learning framework with a focus on mastering essential competencies, strengthening character, and developing students' skills [31]. In its implementation, students are directed to carry out projects as a means of developing potential as well as cross-field skills. One form of implementation of the project is the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which provides a more flexible learning space, both in structure and time distribution, so that learning activities are more active and closer to the reality of student life [32]. P5 activities not only support character building, but also encourage the quality of learning through hands-on experience. To make a real contribution to the environment, students can investigate important topics that correspond to their developmental stage [33]. Thus, P5 plays a strategic role in fostering the competence of the Pancasila Student Profile, which is not only theoretical but also applicative, so that students are able to face challenges while providing a positive social impact [34].

The Pancasila Student Profile is one of the important pillars in 21st-century education because of its relevance to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [35]. Through the activities of the P5 Project, students are directed to internalize essential values such as diversity, cooperation, patriotism, creativity, and critical thinking, which directly support the realization of the global agenda [35]. Real practices in P5 activities, such as fostering diversity, love for the homeland, independence, creativity, and tolerance, are a strong foundation for building the character of students in line with the values of the SDGs [35]. Thus, P5 not only serves as a medium for strengthening character in schools, but also as a strategic instrument that is able to bridge national education with a global commitment to sustainable development [35].

An innovative approach to education, the Independent Learning Curriculum gives educators and schools greater freedom to tailor their teaching to the needs of their students. With a differentiated approach, students are treated as unique individuals with different

learning interests and preferences so that the learning experience becomes more meaningful, contextual, and encourages self-exploration. The application of *project-based learning* further strengthens students' cognitive aspects through analysis, reflection, and real problem-solving activities, which are in line with the development of high-level thinking skills. The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) in the Independent Curriculum is designed to integrate the values of religiosity, diversity, collaboration, independence, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Through this approach, learning is not only directed at academic achievement, but also at the formation of students' character. P5 activities not only instill Pancasila values but also contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through concrete actions that are relevant to students' lives. Thus, the Independent Curriculum becomes an adaptive, innovative, and strategic educational framework in preparing a generation with strong character, competence, and ready to face global challenges.

Comparative Analysis of the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum in the SDGs Value Frame

The 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum both have similarities in terms of character development. Character development is the main goal of the 2013 Curriculum. Students are taught two attitudes, spiritual and social, which embody the character characteristics outlined in the 2013 Curriculum. Spirituality is the application of religious ideas, while social attitudes include qualities such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, politeness, concern for the environment, and confidence in interacting with the environment [22]. Character values are integrated into learning activities, school culture, extracurricular activities, and various fields of study (including local content) in order to instill character education in schools [22].

Meanwhile, the Independent Curriculum emphasizes strengthening the character of students through the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, namely faith and piety to God Almighty, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical thinking skills, and creativity. The excellence of Indonesian students who have global competence, character, are lifelong learners, and behave in accordance with Pancasila values is highlighted in the Pancasila Student Profile. In addition to assisting teachers in building student character and competence, this curriculum also serves as a main source of input for education policy [36]. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes quality education to produce Pancasila students who have the skills to face global problems as Indonesian human resources [36].

However, in terms of cognition, there is a slight difference between the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum. The 2013 curriculum places a strong emphasis on the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in terms of learning outcomes [36]. The 2013 curriculum applies a scientific approach where the learning process is made dynamic and creative through environmental observation. Students are expected to make discoveries and formulate difficulties, collect problems that have been identified, and find solutions to problems that have been discovered [37]. The scientific approach used in the 2013 Curriculum allows students to observe, question, argue, conduct experiments, and network [38]. The Merdeka curriculum is based on a project-based, problem-based learning approach, as well as varied and differentiated learning strategies. This curriculum material was created to provide ample opportunities for students to experiment with concepts and grow as human beings and learners [36]. The Learning Outcomes (CP) of the Independent Curriculum have the same assessment focus, namely knowledge, attitudes, and the ability to develop, improve, and strengthen competencies [39]. Therefore, the 2013 Curriculum emphasises the development of students' overall competencies, while the Independent Curriculum concentrates on specific disciplines [40]. CP in the Independent Curriculum focuses more on academics, while KI-KD in the 2013 Curriculum considers student competencies holistically [40].

Meanwhile, in relation to the SDGs, the 2013 Curriculum organizes learning in a conceptual and integrative manner, combining various disciplines into one theme [41]. Meanwhile, the Independent Curriculum offers flexibility in the approach to organizing learning [42]. The Independent Curriculum emphasises the core content and the development of students' competencies according to their developmental stages [42]. Schools and educators can choose the strategies that best suit the needs of students and the school environment thanks to this flexible approach [41]. The Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes projects, diverse teaching, and hands-on activities, provides flexibility and freedom for teachers and schools to choose the teaching model that best suits the needs of students [43]. Moreover, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) is one of the character-building projects in the Independent Curriculum that is not contained in the 2013 Curriculum [41]. Broad academic skills are the main focus of the 2013 Curriculum. On the contrary, the Independent Curriculum prioritizes the development of students' morals and character [44]. The 2013 curriculum places a strong emphasis on developing students' cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor skills in a balanced manner and encourages them to apply what they have learned in their daily lives. Through the establishment of P5 (Pancasila Student Profile Project), the Independent Curriculum focuses more on the formation of student character [42]. Thus, the Independent Curriculum, with a project-based and contextual approach, opens up opportunities for the integration of SDGs values [3].

The 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum in terms of character education have similarities. If in the 2013 Curriculum character is developed through spiritual and social aspects, the Merdeka Curriculum develops character through the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile. As for the cognitive realm, the 2013 CP Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum both focus on the fields of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. However, there is a slight difference between the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum in the cognitive aspect.

The learning process carried out in the 2013 Curriculum uses a *scientific approach* that encourages students to observe, question, argue, conduct experiments, and build networks. On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum places a strong emphasis on problem-based, project-based, and differentiated learning. In addition, learning planning methods are more adaptable and consider the needs of students. The 2013 Curriculum is fully oriented towards the development of student competencies, while the Independent Curriculum is only limited to a few essential subjects. The Independent Curriculum makes the P5 project a form of emphasis on character development that is not found in the 2013 Curriculum. The P5 project is also closer to the values of the SDGs.

Based on the comparison between the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum, it can be seen that the 2013 Curriculum uses a thematic-integrative approach in collaboration with scientific methods, whose direction is in the form of emphasis on cognitive aspects. The Independent Curriculum places character strengthening as one of the main focuses through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which reflects the values of Pancasila. This effort emphasizes that it is not enough for national education to be oriented only to master the cognitive aspect, but must also balance it with the formation of integrity and character of students.

In the comparison between the 2013 Curriculum (K13) and the Independent Curriculum, it can be seen that there is a significant gap, especially in the aspects of implementation and readiness in the field. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed in the spirit of flexibility, differentiation, and emphasis on essential materials and character strengthening through the Pancasila Student Profile. However, the freedom offered has not been fully utilized optimally by all schools, due to limited human resources, infrastructure, and learning tools. This creates a gap in the quality of education, where schools with complete facilities are better able to adopt change, while schools in areas with limitations find it difficult to keep up with the new policy rhythm.

In addition, there is a gap in the aspect of perception and measurement of learning outcomes. Although the Independent Curriculum focuses on authentic assessments and learning outcomes per phase, many teachers are still familiar with the K13 assessment pattern based on basic competencies and quantitative scores. This change in the system confuses both in the preparation of assessment instruments and in ensuring the equality of quality between schools. On the other hand, the public still has doubts that a more flexible curriculum can guarantee the equivalent quality of graduates nationally. Thus, the main challenge is not only in the design of the curriculum, but also in how governments, schools, and teachers can close the gap between policy and practice so that curriculum transformation truly has a positive impact on the quality of education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The 2013 curriculum is designed as an integrated system that emphasizes a balance between attitudes, knowledge, and skills, with the application of core competencies focusing on spiritual, social, knowledge, and practical skills aspects. Through a thematic-integrative approach combined with scientific methods, students are encouraged to actively build knowledge through real experiences so that learning becomes more contextual, meaningful, and fun. Meanwhile, the Independent Learning Curriculum is a breakthrough in the world of education that gives greater freedom to teachers and schools to adapt learning to the needs of students. With a differentiated approach, students are seen as unique individuals with a variety of interests and learning styles, so that the learning experience becomes more meaningful, contextual, and encourages self-exploration. In addition to focusing on academic achievements, the Independent Curriculum also emphasizes strengthening character through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which integrates religious values, diversity, cooperation, independence, creativity, and critical thinking. P5 activities not only instil Pancasila values but also contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through concrete actions that are relevant to students' lives. Although both focus on knowledge, attitudes, and skills on cognitive aspects, character development in the two curricula is different. The 2013 Curriculum is developed through spiritual and social aspects, while the Independent Curriculum is developed through the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile. The 2013 curriculum is fully oriented towards the development of student competencies. On the other hand, the Independent Curriculum is limited to a few essential subjects. The Independent Curriculum makes the P5 project a form of emphasis on character development that is not found in the 2013 Curriculum. The P5 project is also closer to the values of the SDGs. Based on the comparison between the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum, it can be seen that the 2013 Curriculum uses a thematic-integrative approach in collaboration with scientific methods, whose direction is in the form of emphasis on cognitive aspects. The Independent Curriculum places great emphasis on character aspects, as can be seen from the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which integrates Pancasila values. The National Curriculum should fully integrate cognitive and character aspects so that it can produce graduates who are not only competent in the academic field, but also have integrity and strong character. In closing, the success of the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is highly dependent on systematic efforts to close the gap between policy and reality on the ground. The government needs to strengthen teacher training, provide equitable teaching tools, and build a fair and transparent evaluation system so that curriculum flexibility does not cause gaps in the quality of education. On the other hand, schools and teachers need to continue to adapt to the new paradigm of learning that emphasizes differentiation, character, and meaning of essential materials, so that the main goal of the curriculum, which is to produce a generation of students who are independent, critical, and with Pancasila character, can truly be realized comprehensively in various educational contexts in Indonesia.

Acknowledgments

The authors sincerely thank Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga and Monash University for their academic support and valuable contributions to the completion of this research.

Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to conceptualization, data collection, analysis, manuscript preparation, revision, and approval of the final version for publication.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, publication, or financial support associated with this study.

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