

# Integration of Pancasila Values in Merdeka Curriculum: Educational Innovation in the Era of Society 5.0 in Indonesia

Zainuddin Zainuddin

Faculty of Tarbiyah, Institute of Islamic Religion al-Qur'an al-Ittifaqiah Indralaya, South Sumatra, Indonesia

## Abstract

Entering the era of Society 5.0, the Indonesian education system faces great challenges in integrating Pancasila values into technology-based learning through the Merdeka Curriculum. The main problem is that the systematic integration of character values has not been optimized, the low digital readiness of schools, and the lack of character evaluation instruments. This study uses a systematic literature review method to analyze the strategies, challenges, and effectiveness of the integration of Pancasila values in the Merdeka Curriculum. The findings show that integration is carried out through a holistic approach: structural (P5), functional (learner profile), and cultural (school culture). The implication is that schools that successfully adopt this approach show improved character, meaningful digital competencies, and strengthened national identity. However, limitations of this study include reliance on secondary literature, publication bias, and a narrow temporal context as the curriculum implementation is still relatively new. Future studies are recommended to use empirical approaches to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of this integration, including the development of digital-based character assessment models. This research confirms that the integration of Pancasila values is not just a complement, but the main foundation of education in the digital era. With the synergy between local values and global innovation, Indonesian education has the potential to form a generation that is smart, characterized, and well-rounded.

## Keywords

Merdeka Curriculum, Pancasila Values, Society 5.0, Character Education, Digital Competence, Pancasila Learner Profile Introduction

## 1. Introduction

As we enter the Society 5.0 era, the world of education faces a new set of challenges that demand integration between technological sophistication and human values. Society 5.0, a concept first introduced in Japan, emphasizes the importance of creating a technologically advanced yet human-centered society. In this context, education must not only produce digitally competent learners but also cultivate individuals with strong moral character, social empathy, and civic responsibility [1]. In Indonesia, the values of Pancasila—which serve as the nation's philosophical foundation—are considered highly relevant to meeting these challenges, as they embody a synthesis of spiritual, social, and national intelligence [2].

However, the implementation of character education in Indonesia has faced persistent issues. Previous curricula, such as the 2013 Curriculum, have been criticized for overemphasizing cognitive achievement while failing to systematically integrate character values across all subject areas and learning activities [3]. This has created a gap between students' academic success and the internalization of moral values such as integrity, mutual cooperation, and tolerance. This situation is further exacerbated by the rapid influx of global digital culture, which often contradicts the nation's noble values [4].

In response to both the learning crisis and the pressures of globalization, the Indonesian government launched the Merdeka Curriculum in 2022. This curriculum offers a more flexible, contextual, and student-centered approach, including the incorporation of character-building projects through the Pancasila Student Profile (Profil Pelajar Pancasila). Through six key dimensions—faith and piety to the Almighty God and noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity—the Merdeka Curriculum aims to holistically shape students' character. Although many schools have begun implementing this curriculum, its success largely depends on teacher readiness, infrastructure availability, and the existence of a supportive school culture [5]. Additionally, a consistent and measurable evaluation instrument to assess the integration of Pancasila values remains lacking [6].

To date, academic studies on the integration of Pancasila values within technology- and digital-based education remain limited. Most existing literature focuses on philosophical perspectives or treats character development as a stand-alone curricular project, without directly linking it to the challenges and opportunities of learning in the Society 5.0 era. As such, there exists a research gap in understanding how Pancasila values can be operationalized in a flexible and innovative curriculum aligned with global demands.

This study aims to explore how Pancasila values are integrated into the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum as an innovation in character education in the Society 5.0 era. Specifically, it seeks to analyze implementation strategies, encountered challenges, and best practices that can serve as models across various educational contexts. The study is expected to contribute theoretically by offering a conceptual framework that integrates local and global values in character education, and practically by providing educational policy recommendations to cultivate a digitally intelligent generation grounded in national identity.

## **2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development**

### **2.1 Character Education Based on Local Values**

Character education constitutes an essential foundation within the national education system, aimed at cultivating a generation of citizens with integrity and noble character. The concept of character education articulated by Hidayatullah et al. (2024) identifies three fundamental interconnected dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, which aligns with Thomas Lickona's theory of good character [7]. Lickona emphasizes that the character education perspective encompasses three fundamental elements: understanding what is morally right, possessing deep appreciation for moral values, and actively implementing these values in one's actions [8]. These three components form a holistic cycle whereby students not only comprehend moral values cognitively but also internalize them emotionally and apply them in actual behavior. The integration of these three dimensions requires a systematic and sustained pedagogical approach, wherein the learning environment is designed to facilitate comprehensive character transformation through various instructional strategies that engage students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, as developed in various international research on moral development and character education [9].

Within the Indonesian context, the implementation of character education gains a robust philosophical framework through Pancasila values as the nation's ideology. The five principles of Pancasila-Belief in the One and Only God, Just and Civilized Humanity, Unity of Indonesia, Democracy Guided by the Inner Wisdom in the Unanimity Arising Out of Deliberations Amongst Representatives, and Social Justice for All Indonesian People-provide a comprehensive moral foundation for students' character development. The divine principle instills transcendent spiritual and moral dimensions, while the humanitarian principle develops empathy and appreciation for human dignity. Indonesian Unity builds collective consciousness and nationalism, democracy teaches active participation and social responsibility, whereas social justice cultivates concern for collective welfare. The integration of Pancasila values within curriculum and learning practices enables the creation of an educational ecosystem that not only transfers knowledge but also shapes students' character in harmony with the Indonesian national identity.

The primary challenge in implementing Pancasila-based character education lies in the consistency and continuity of its application across all levels of formal education. Strong synergy is required among macro-educational policies, educators' pedagogical competencies, and social environmental support to ensure that character values are not merely taught theoretically but are also modeled and practiced in daily school life. Systematic research on character development in developing countries demonstrates the importance of integrated approaches across various educational domains, ranging from psychology to child and adolescent development [10]. Continuous evaluation and monitoring of character education program effectiveness becomes crucial for measuring long-term impacts on students' personality formation, as articulated in comprehensive studies on the status and development of moral education research that analyze macro-developmental trends in this field [11]. Through systematic and integrated approaches, Pancasila-based character education can serve as a strategic instrument in realizing the national education vision that produces generations who are not only intellectually competent but also possess noble character and contribute positively to national progress and global civilization.

### **2.2 The Merdeka Curriculum and Holistic Approach**

The Merdeka Curriculum was introduced as a comprehensive response to the dynamic learning needs of the 21st century, which necessitate flexibility, differentiation, and contextualization in educational processes. This new paradigm marks a fundamental shift from uniform learning approaches toward adaptive and responsive learning that accommodates the diverse characteristics of learners [12]. One of the revolutionary innovations within the Merdeka Curriculum is the systematic integration of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which strategically positions character education as the epicenter of the entire learning ecosystem [13]. P5 is designed as interdisciplinary learning that enables students to observe, analyze, and formulate solutions to contextual problems in their surrounding environment to strengthen various competencies within the Pancasila Student Profile [14]. This integrative approach not only develops students' academic capabilities but also shapes character traits that are faithful, devout, noble in character, globally diverse, collaborative, independent, critically reasoning, and creative as manifestations of Pancasila values in daily life.

The implementation of P5 within the Merdeka Curriculum reflects the adoption of holistic education theory that explicitly emphasizes the balanced and integrated development of students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains within relevant socio-cultural contexts [15]. Holistic education theory, as developed by Miller and Forbes, advocates learning approaches that focus not solely on intellectual aspects but also consider emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions in the process of comprehensive character formation [16]. Within the P5 context, the integration of these three learning domains manifests through project designs that require students to: 1) develop conceptual

understanding and critical thinking abilities (cognitive domain), 2) internalize moral values and develop empathy as well as social concern (affective domain), and 3) implement concrete solutions through real actions and practical skills (psychomotor domain) [17]. This holistic approach enables meaningful and transformative learning, whereby students not only acquire knowledge but also experience comprehensive and sustained character formation.

The effectiveness of P5 implementation in achieving character education objectives depends on the quality of instructional design, educator competency, and the support of a conducive school ecosystem. Empirical research demonstrates that P5's success in shaping student character requires differentiated learning approaches that accommodate diverse learning styles, interests, and individual student needs [18,19]. The primary challenges in P5 implementation include: 1) limited pedagogical competency among educators in designing and implementing meaningful project-based learning, 2) inadequate infrastructure and learning resources to support interdisciplinary project activities, and 3) the complexity of authentic assessment capable of comprehensively measuring character achievement<sup>8</sup>. To address these challenges, systematic efforts are required in educator capacity development, provision of adequate learning resources, and development of valid and reliable evaluation instruments to measure P5's impact on student character formation [20-22]. Through quality and sustainable implementation, P5 has the potential to serve as a catalyst for educational transformation in Indonesia toward a learning system that produces graduates who are not only academically competent but also possess noble character and are prepared to face the global challenges of the 21st century.

### 2.3 Society 5.0 and Educational Transformation

Society 5.0 represents a new paradigm in the evolution of human civilization that harmoniously integrates the physical and digital worlds to create innovative solutions for contemporary social complexities [23]. This concept, initiated by Japan, emphasizes not merely technological advancement but also the humanization of technology that prioritizes human welfare and social sustainability [24]. In the educational context, Society 5.0 demands a fundamental transformation from traditional educational models toward adaptive, inclusive, and data-driven learning systems, where artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, and big data analytics serve as catalysts in creating personalized and contextual learning experiences [25]. This transformation requires educational institutions to transcend conventional knowledge transfer toward the development of 21st-century competencies encompassing digital literacy, critical thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, and effective communication [26].

The implementation of Society 5.0 in education presents a paradoxical challenge between technological advancement and the preservation of fundamental human values [27]. On one hand, technology offers unprecedented accessibility to learning and personalization, while on the other hand, it poses risks of dehumanization and erosion of socio-cultural values [28,29]. In this context, character education becomes an essential component that cannot be overlooked, as it serves as the moral and ethical foundation for utilizing technology for collective welfare [30]. The Society 5.0 generation must possess the ability to navigate the complexities of the digital world while maintaining high levels of empathy, integrity, and social responsibility. This demands the development of curricula that focus not only on technical competencies but also on fostering strong character, adaptability to rapid change, and awareness of the social and environmental impacts of every decision and action taken [31].

Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum), with its fundamental philosophy emphasizing flexibility, differentiation, and student-centered learning, provides an ideal framework for integrating Pancasila values as the foundation of character education in the Society 5.0 era [20]. The five principles of Pancasila-Belief in the One and Only God, Just and Civilized Humanity, Unity of Indonesia, Democracy Guided by the Inner Wisdom in the Unanimity Arising Out of Deliberations Among Representatives, and Social Justice for All Indonesian People-offer a comprehensive value framework for addressing the complex socio-technological challenges of the future [32]. This integration is not only relevant but also crucial in building social resilience and national identity amid the increasingly massive currents of globalization and digitalization. Through this approach, Indonesian education can produce a generation that is not only technologically competent but also possesses strong character, capable of collaborating within diversity, and committed to the values of justice and social sustainability that constitute the true essence of Society 5.0.

### 2.4 Curriculum Implementation Theory

The curriculum implementation theory developed by Michael Fullan provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexity of sustainable educational change processes. Fullan identifies three fundamental dimensions that determine the success of curriculum implementation: 1) the use of new or revised materials encompassing technology and learning resources, 2) the application of new teaching approaches involving innovative learning strategies and activities, and 3) deeper changes in the values and beliefs underlying educational practices [33]. These three dimensions interact dynamically and cannot be separated in effective implementation processes. The first dimension, while most visible, is relatively easy to implement due to its tangible nature, whereas the second and third dimensions require more fundamental transformation in educator mindset and practice [34]. The complexity of curriculum implementation increases exponentially when all three dimensions must be changed simultaneously, necessitating holistic and sustainable change management strategies [35].

The success of curriculum implementation, according to Fullan, depends on the ability of implementers to create new meaning through continuous improvement in curriculum materials, skills, understanding, behavior, and beliefs [36]. Fullan emphasizes that curriculum implementation is not merely the mechanical adoption of curriculum documents, but rather a transformative process involving the reconstruction of understanding and practice at both individual and institutional levels [37]. Key factors influencing implementation success include: clarity and relevance of curriculum objectives, human resource capacity (particularly teachers and principals), systemic support in the form of consistent policies and adequate resource allocation, and an organizational culture that supports innovation and continuous learning. Primary stakeholders in this process include students, teachers, principals, parents and community members, district administrators, and educational consultants who must work synergistically to achieve common goals [38]. Successful implementation also requires a balance between external pressure (accountability) and internal support (capacity building) to ensure the sustainability of change.

In the context of implementing Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, Fullan's theory provides strategic guidance for effectively integrating Pancasila values into the national education system. The application of the new materials dimension is reflected in the development of contextual teaching materials that align with Indonesia's cultural diversity, as well as the utilization of educational technology that supports student-centered learning [39]. The new teaching approaches dimension requires teachers to master pedagogy capable of integrating Pancasila values into every aspect of learning through interactive, collaborative, and reflective methods. Meanwhile, the belief change dimension necessitates a paradigmatic transformation in education from teacher-centered to student-centered learning that emphasizes character development and 21st-century competencies [22]. The successful integration of Pancasila values in Kurikulum Merdeka requires massive investment in teacher professional development, authentic evaluation systems capable of comprehensively measuring character development, and consistent policy support from national to school levels. Furthermore, this implementation must consider local contexts and Indonesia's socio-cultural diversity, so that Pancasila values can be meaningfully articulated in students' learning experiences across different regions [40].

## 2.5 Research Framework

Drawing from the perspectives of character education and curriculum implementation, this conceptual model posits that the Merdeka Curriculum serves as a primary foundation for shaping student character by embedding Pancasila values as core content. However, the success of this process is also significantly influenced by digital readiness and a school's openness to navigating the challenges of the Society 5.0 era. Accordingly, "readiness for Society 5.0" is proposed as a moderating variable that may strengthen or weaken the impact of value integration on character formation.

## 3. Methods and Design

This study employed a library research approach using the systematic literature review (SLR) method to analyze the integration of Pancasila values within the Merdeka Curriculum as an innovation in character education in the Society 5.0 era [41]. This method was selected because it allows researchers to gather, analyze, and synthesize a wide range of relevant scholarly literature to construct a comprehensive understanding of the research topic without conducting primary data collection in the field [42].

The literature search was conducted systematically across several major academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), ProQuest Education Database, JSTOR, and Garuda (Garba Rujukan Digital) [43]. Keywords used in the search included combinations of "Pancasila values", "Kurikulum Merdeka", "Independent Curriculum", "character education", "Society 5.0", "Indonesia education", "Profil Pelajar Pancasila", and "pendidikan karakter". To ensure a comprehensive coverage, searches were conducted in both English and Indonesian, targeting literature published between 2020 and 2025 to capture the most current discussions on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Inclusion criteria for the literature encompassed peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, official research reports, and government policy documents that discussed the integration of Pancasila values, the Merdeka Curriculum, character education, or Society 5.0 in the Indonesian educational context [44]. Exclusion criteria included articles irrelevant to the Indonesian context, non-peer-reviewed publications, and sources that focused solely on technical curriculum aspects without addressing character values or Pancasila. The literature selection process was carried out in three stages: (1) title and abstract screening, (2) full-text review, and (3) quality assessment using a checklist adapted from PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines [45].

Data analysis was performed using content analysis and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and key concepts emerging from the literature [46]. The analysis process began with initial coding of all relevant texts, followed by categorization based on theoretical dimensions identified in the study's conceptual framework [47]. Literature synthesis was conducted narratively by integrating findings from diverse sources to construct a coherent argument on the integration of Pancasila values in the Merdeka Curriculum. To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher applied source triangulation by comparing findings across various types of publications and differing theoretical perspectives [48].

The limitations of this study include its reliance on the quality and availability of existing literature, potential publication bias due to the exclusive use of published sources, and temporal constraints since the Merdeka Curriculum

has only been implemented nationally since 2022. Nevertheless, this library research approach enables the researcher to establish a strong theoretical foundation and identify research gaps that can serve as a basis for future empirical studies [49].

#### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

##### **4.1 Integration of Pancasila Values in Merdeka Curriculum: A Holistic Approach**

The literature analysis reveals that the integration of Pancasila values in the Merdeka Curriculum is carried out through a holistic approach involving three key dimensions: structural, functional, and cultural [50]. Structurally, Pancasila values are embedded through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which forms an integral part of the curriculum structure, rather than being treated as a separate subject. This finding aligns with Lickona's (2019) concept of character education, which asserts that character formation must be integrated into all aspects of school life, not limited to formal learning [51].

The functional dimension refers to the operationalization of Pancasila values through the six core learner profiles: faith in and devotion to God Almighty and noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity [52]. Each of these dimensions includes specific, measurable elements that can be evaluated within learning contexts. For example, the "mutual cooperation" dimension is translated into indicators such as collaboration, empathy, and sharing-observable through project-based learning and group activities.

Meanwhile, the cultural dimension pertains to the creation of a school culture that promotes the embodiment of Pancasila values in daily life. The analysis shows that schools that have successfully implemented the Merdeka Curriculum tend to exhibit a strong organizational culture that embraces Pancasila values [19]. This is reflected in school policies, interpersonal interactions, and extracurricular programs that reinforce character development.

##### **4.2 Challenges of Implementation in the Society 5.0 Era**

Technical challenges primarily concern the unequal distribution of technological infrastructure and digital access across Indonesia. The literature highlights the persistent digital divide between urban and rural schools as a major obstacle to the effective implementation of technology-based learning that integrates Pancasila values [53]. Remote schools continue to struggle with limited internet connectivity, inadequate access to technological devices, and insufficient technical support.

Furthermore, integrating technology into character education requires platforms and applications that are contextually relevant to Indonesia. Analysis shows that most digital learning platforms currently available are still dominated by Western values and cultural frameworks, posing difficulties in preserving the authenticity of Pancasila values within digital learning environments [54].

From a pedagogical perspective, the main challenge lies in teachers' readiness to combine digital tools with character education [55]. The literature indicates that many Indonesian educators still require professional development in three key areas: 1) a deep understanding of Pancasila values and how to operationalize them in teaching; 2) digital literacy to support character-based learning; and 3) the ability to design balanced learning experiences that integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

Another significant barrier is the authentic assessment of character development. Unlike cognitive assessment, which is supported by standardized instruments, character evaluation demands more complex and contextualized approaches [56]. The Society 5.0 era calls for the creation of assessment systems capable of objectively measuring students' character while maintaining the humanistic essence of the learning process.

Socio-cultural challenges arise from the contradictions between traditional Pancasila values and global values propagated through digital technologies [57]. Cultural globalization, particularly through social media and digital platforms, often clashes with local values such as mutual cooperation, politeness, and respect for elders [58]. The literature shows that students frequently experience value conflicts between what they are taught at school and the content they consume via digital media.

##### **4.3 Innovation Strategy in Implementation**

Based on the literature analysis, several innovative strategies have proven effective in integrating Pancasila values within the Merdeka Curriculum during the Society 5.0 era. One key strategy is the use of technology as a facilitative tool for learning Pancasila values through concrete, student-relevant projects [59]. Examples identified in the literature include: 1) digital content creation projects promoting Indonesian diversity, 2) the development of mobile applications that facilitate community-based mutual cooperation, and 3) the use of virtual reality to provide immersive experiences of Indonesia's cultural diversity.

The strength of these strategies lies in their ability to foster students' multiple intelligences while deepening their internalization of Pancasila values. Students do not merely learn about technology—they use it as a medium to express and practice the nation's core values [4].

The implementation of blended learning approaches, which combine face-to-face instruction with online learning, has also proven effective in supporting character education [60]. Online learning components can be used to deliver theoretical content on Pancasila values, while face-to-face sessions focus on the practical application and internalization of values through direct social interaction.

This strategy enables personalized learning tailored to individual students' needs and learning styles. Online platforms allow for differentiated content aligned with students' levels of understanding, while in-person sessions offer opportunities for reflection, discussion, and reinforcement of values through interpersonal engagement [61].

Another emerging innovation is the development of a digital learning ecosystem curated specifically for the Indonesian context. This includes platforms, mobile apps, and digital content designed with Pancasila values at their core. Several schools have pioneered the use of learning management systems (LMS) that incorporate local cultural elements into their user interfaces and instructional content [62]. This ecosystem also involves collaboration with multiple stakeholders, including the government, technology industries, educational institutions, and civil society, to ensure the sustainability and quality of the materials produced.

#### 4.4 Impact and Effectiveness of Implementation

Evaluations of the implementation of Pancasila value integration within the Merdeka Curriculum reveal varying results, depending on the context and quality of execution. The literature indicates that schools with successful implementation demonstrate improvements across several key indicators.

Research findings show a significant enhancement in student character traits, particularly in areas such as empathy, tolerance, and social awareness. Students participating in P5 (Pancasila Student Profile) programs exhibit stronger collaboration skills, greater appreciation for diversity, and a higher sense of social responsibility in various contexts [18].

These improvements are observed not only within the school environment but also extend into students' everyday lives at home and in the community. Parents have reported positive behavioral changes in their children, especially regarding manners, concern for others, and critical thinking ability.

Effective implementation has also resulted in the advancement of students' digital competencies, encompassing not only technical skills but also ethical dimensions [63]. Students demonstrate responsible digital behavior, such as avoiding the spread of misinformation, respecting others' privacy, and using digital platforms for constructive purposes.

One of the most noteworthy outcomes is the strengthening of students' national identity without diminishing their openness to global values [63]. Students express greater pride in Indonesian culture while maintaining a broad global perspective. This is reflected in their ability to appreciate cultural diversity worldwide while continuing to preserve and promote local heritage.

#### 5. Conclusion

The integration of Pancasila values into the Independent Curriculum represents a strategic response to the educational challenges of the Society 5.0 era, which demands a balance between digital literacy and national character. A holistic approach encompassing structural, functional, and cultural dimensions has proven effective in shaping learners who are characterized by strong values, adaptability, and global competitiveness. However, the implementation of this value integration still faces significant challenges, such as disparities in technological infrastructure, low pedagogical competence of teachers in digital-based character education, and value contradictions resulting from the influence of global cultures. Innovative learning methods based on project-based learning, blended learning, and the development of a digital ecosystem grounded in local values have emerged as potential solutions to strengthen this integration process.

Findings indicate that the Independent Curriculum not only enhances students' digital competencies but also reinforces ethical technology use and national identity. Nevertheless, the sustainability of value integration heavily depends on systemic support, teacher training, and the development of standardized character evaluation instruments. Therefore, further empirical studies are necessary to measure the long-term effectiveness of this integration across various educational contexts. Pancasila-based education remains the fundamental foundation in preparing a globally competitive Indonesian generation without losing its cultural roots.

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