Character Education in Educational Policies and Cultural Integration: Indonesia and Turkiye

Genta Qory Aisya* ⓘD

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Sakarya Üniversitesi, Türkiye
email: *gentaqoryaisy@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines character education frameworks within Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum and Turkiye's Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli (TYMM), analyzing how cultural values are embedded and their role in promoting cultural integration. Through a comparative analysis, the study explores the similarities and differences between Indonesia's Pancasila Student Profile, which is implemented through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) project-based learning program that emphasizes unity in diversity, and Turkiye's Yetkin ve Erdemli (Competent and Virtuous) Student Profile, which is conceptualized through a comprehensive framework of Erdem-Değer-Eylem (Virtue-Value-Action) that prioritizes national identity and spiritual values.

Introduction

Character education has emerged as a key component of educational policy globally, reflecting society's priorities and aspirations to develop not only academically competent but also morally upright citizens. The rising influence of globalization simultaneously encouraged multiple nations to recognize the importance of cultivating moral virtues and ethical values alongside academic knowledge to prepare students for global challenges (Huda et al., 2022). Indonesia and Turkiye present two distinct yet unique frameworks for comparison, as both nations have rich cultural heritages that substantially shape their approaches to character education, while balancing traditional values with modern educational needs.

Indonesia, with its pluralistic society and diverse cultures, has placed character education at the center of national educational objectives through the Kurikulum Merdeka (Merdeka Curriculum), which emphasizes Indonesia's national ideology of Pancasila values within the Pancasila Student Profile as a framework for character development (Wijayanti, 2023). Similarly, Turkiye, with its unique geographical position bridging Eastern and Western values simultaneously, has recently introduced a new curriculum reform, namely Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli [TYMM] (Türkiye Century Education Model), which focuses on character development emphasized in *Yetkin ve Erdemli* (Competent and Virtuous) student profile, and conceptualized through a comprehensive framework of *Erdem-Değer-Eylem* (Virtue-Value-Action) (Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024).

Despite the growing emphasis on character education worldwide, there remains a significant gap in comparative studies across countries examining how different cultural contexts shape character education approaches in educational curriculum and practices. Particularly, the strategies in integrating character education with cultural values become more complex in a diverse society like Indonesia, where regional cultural elements must be harmonized with national values and identity (Mahfud, 2023; Rachmah, n.d.; Tahir et al., 2024). On the other hand, Turkiye's implementation strategy in balancing religious and secular values through a character education framework on its educational curriculum presents a unique and distinct approach (Kaya, 2010; Yentür, 2024).

This study aims to address these gaps through a comparative analysis of character education policies and frameworks contained in Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum and Turkiye's TYMM, analyzing the similarities and differences, and examining how cultural values are embedded in these curriculums and how they contribute to cultural integration within respective countries.

Literature Review

Character education has evolved as a critical component of educational policies worldwide, with diverse approaches reflecting local cultural contexts. According to Thomas Lickona (1992), character education is "the deliberate effort to help people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values". Lickona's comprehensive approach emphasizes three essential components: moral knowing (cognitive), moral feeling (emotional), and moral action (behavioral), suggesting that effective character education must engage students across all these dimensions (Lickona, 1992). Building upon Lickona's foundation, effective character education, as noted by Berkowitz and Bier (2005), involves not just teaching ethical principles but also creating environments where students can emotionally connect with these values and apply them in real-life situations.

Cultural integration, another key concept in this study, refers to how individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds adapt to and incorporate elements of the dominant or host culture while maintaining aspects of their original cultural identity. According to Berry (2005), cultural integration is one of four acculturation strategies where individuals maintain their original cultural identity while also participating in the broader society. In educational contexts, Banks (2015) conceptualizes cultural integration through his dimensions of multicultural education, which include content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding how educational institutions can promote cultural integration.

Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, introduced in 2022, represents a significant educational reform by providing schools and teachers with greater autonomy in the curriculum implementation while maintaining focus on essential competencies. At the center, this curriculum has placed *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile) as the fundamental principles guiding national character development, with six key character dimensions consisting of faith in God, global diversity, independent learning, critical reasoning, creativity, and *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), reflecting the efforts to balance national values and global competencies within educational settings (Kemendikbudristek, 2022 (Rachmah, n.d.(Kadir, 2023; Rachman et al., 2024; Sakti et al., 2024). According to Widodo et al. (2023), the formation of this framework is a response to concerns about moral degradation among the young generation by explicitly articulating character dimensions that align with both traditional Indonesian values and contemporary global competencies.

On the other hand, *Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli* (TYMM), introduced in 2024, presents a recent educational reform that emphasizes developing *Yetkin ve Erdemli insan*

(competent and virtuous individuals) through the *Erdem-Değer-Eylem çerçevesi* (Virtue-Value-Action framework). According to Yıldırım & Çalışkan (2024), this curriculum model integrates Turkish cultural and national values with contemporary educational approaches by focusing on character development alongside academic competencies. The Virtue-Value-Action framework emphasizes moral virtues rooted in Turkiye's cultural and historical heritage while preparing students for the 21st century's challenges. Akpınar et al. (2024) noted that this curriculum reform aims to strengthen national identity and cultural values while addressing contemporary educational challenges, reflecting Turkiye's efforts to balance both national priorities and cultural preservation with educational innovations.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research method, which is suited for exploring the contextualized nature of character education policies in Indonesia and Turkiye, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the cultural, historical, and social dimensions embedded within it, aligned with the objectives of this study to analyze the cultural dimensions of the respective curriculum.

Data Collection Methods

The primary method of data collection in this study is document analysis, focusing on official national curriculum documents, Ministry of Education publications, policy papers, and relevant academic studies on character education in both countries.

Data Analysis Techniques

The study employs descriptive analysis to examine the content of selected documents. Descriptive analysis involves summarizing, categorizing, and interpreting information to identify patterns, themes, and relationships relevant to the research questions, providing a clear understanding of how character education in both countries reflects cultural values and contributes to cultural integration in Indonesia and Turkiye.

Findings

Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka (Merdeka Curriculum)

Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar* is a curriculum that gives students freedom to learn, which means students can access knowledge without strict limitations on learning concepts implemented both inside and outside the school, encouraging creativity from students and teachers (Manalu et al., 2022). Philosophically, character formation through character education is necessary to achieve the nation's educational goals, as character education plays an important role in developing students' potential and shaping Indonesian society with noble character (Pratomo & Herlambang, 2021; Safitri et al., 2022).

This curriculum highlights the project-based learning methods to foster student character development through the Pancasila Student Profile, which serves to develop the character and abilities of students in carrying out learning activities (Suryadien et al., 2022). The Pancasila Profile possessed by students acts as a symbol of Indonesian students who are cultured, have strong character, and embody the values of Pancasila (Rosmana et al., 2022).

Pancasila Student Profile

The Pancasila Student Profile aims to enhance Indonesia's education quality by focusing on character education through intracurricular and extracurricular learning, and school culture, at primary education level onwards (Rachmawati et al., 2022). This profile is expected to manifest students who are not only intelligent but also have global competitiveness, character, and adhere to the values of Pancasila, reinforcing Indonesia's motto of 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' (Syafi'i, 2022; Direktorat Sekolah Dasar, 2020).

This student profile incorporates Indonesian national identity, including cultures and the implementation of Pancasila values in everyday life, providing students understanding to become a society that is able to accept and utilize diversity, maintain cultural values and identity, improve and use their knowledge, and internalize character values and noble morals (Kemendikbud, 2020; Safitri et al., 2022). Pancasila values integrated in the education cultivate students with ethics and morals based on Pancasila ideology, religious norms and academic values fulfilling graduate professionalism (Istianah et al. 2021).

According to the Ministry of Education of Indonesia, there are 6 dimensions of the Pancasila student profile (Istianah et al., 2021; Kemendikbud, 2020).

Table 1*: Pancasila student profile dimensions*

Dimension	Description	Elements
Faithful, fearful of God, and having a noble character	Students have good character in their relationship with God, understanding their religious beliefs, and implementing their understanding in everyday life.	Religious morals, personal morals, morals towards humans, nature, and the state.
Berkebhinekaan Global (Global diversity)	Students maintain their noble culture, locality, identity, and remain open-minded in interaction with other cultures, fostering mutual respect	Recognizing and appreciating culture, intercultural communication skills, reflection, and responsibility towards diversity and social justice.
Bergotong royong (Mutual Coorperation)	Students have the ability to engage in mutual cooperation, voluntarily undertake activities together to make work easier and more efficient.	Collaboration, caring, and sharing.
Independent	Students can take responsibility for their own learning process and outcomes.	Awareness of self and situation; and self-regulation.
Critical reasoning	Students able to objectively process information, establish connections, analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions.	Acquiring and processing information, analyzing and evaluating reasoning, ref-lecting on thinking processes; and decision-making.
Creative	Students able to modify and produce something original, meaningful, useful and impactful.	Generating original ideas, and producing original works and actions, having flexibility of thought in seeking alternative solutions to problems.

These dimensions are integrated in various subjects, particularly in Religious Studies, Pancasila and Civics Education, Social Sciences, and Science Studies, helping students achieve

religious knowledge, nationalism, social care, and the use of technology 4.0 (Nur'Inayah, 2021). To support the implementation, the Ministry of Education and Culture established the Pioneer Schools Program (*Program Sekolah Penggerak*) as model schools to strengthen the capacity of school principals and teachers as key agents in educational reform, engaging community collaboration, to reinforce the desired character traits and competencies (Syafi'i, 2021; Javanisa et al., 2022; Rachmawati et al., 2022) .

Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5 Program)

The Pancasila Student Profile's competencies and characters are achieved through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) program, which involves learning in various disciplines to observe and address issues around the students' environment through project-based learning, allowing students to be more active, interactive, and contextual, to gain first-hand experience that strengthens character values (Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021). This program design can differ from one region to another, ensuring contextually appropriate implementations, where schools can involve the participation of society and/or the workforce to design and organize the project (Rachmawati et al. 2022).

According to Suhardi (2022), the P5 principles consist of four key aspects:

Table 2: *Pancasila student profile strengthening project key principles*

Principle	Description
Holistic	Emphasizes a comprehensive and integrated approach that encourages examining issues deeply and understanding the interconnectedness between students, educators, schools, society, and real-life contexts
Contextual	Relates to using real-life experiences and local environments as primary learning resources, encouraging students to explore issues relevant to their communities
Student-centered	Focuses on active, independent learning where students become the main agents of their education, with teachers as facilitators
Explorative	Promotes broad, flexible learning beyond formal curriculum constraints, allowing students to engage in inquiry and personal development through structured and integrated projects

To support the implementation of learning, the central government and regional governments have respective authorities divided into specific roles. The Ministry of Education and Culture regulates curriculum structure, Pancasila Student Profile, learning outcomes, learning principles, and assessment, while the regional government regulates school vision and mission, student profiles at schools, local policies, learning and assessment processes, operational curriculum development, and teaching tools (Rachmawati et al. 2022).

There are six main project themes established by the Ministry that must be implemented by education units: Sustainable Lifestyle, Local Wisdom, Unity in Diversity, Build the Soul and Body, Engineering and Technology, and Entrepreneurship (Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021; Faiz et al., 2022). These project themes enable schools and teachers to have the authority and flexibility to develop, choose, and modify their project topics according to the students' context, characteristics, potential, and needs (Istianah et al., 2021).

Türkiye's Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli (Türkiye Century Education Model)

In 2024, the Ministry of National Education of Türkiye officially announced the *Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli* (TYMM) as an educational reform to be gradually implemented in the

2024-2025 academic year, aiming to reshape the Turkish education system (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024). The foundation of this curriculum is the K12 Skills Framework Türkiye Holistic Model, prepared within the scope of a bilateral protocol between the Ministry and UNICEF (Berk & Özer, 2024; Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2023; Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024).

According to Ülçay (2024), this curriculum has several important goals to improve the quality of education in Türkiye and help students face future challenges: Student-Centered Education, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Technology Integration, Global Competitiveness, and Social and Emotional Development. Under the motto of *Köklerden geleceğe* (From the roots to the future), TYMM curriculum aims to cultivate individuals who are at peace with themselves, integrated with Turkish societal values, and supported by national and spiritual values strengthened by science (Köse, 2024; Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024). The TYMM emphasized that effective educational programs primarily depend on how clearly the profile of the individual sought to develop is defined, incorporating cultural values and heritage into modern pedagogical practices, reflecting Turkiye's rich historical and philosophical traditions aimed at cultivating a strong national identity alongside contemporary educational goals (Köse 2024; Akpınar, 2024; Efe, 2024).

Yetkin ve Erdemli (Competent and Virtuous) Student Profile

The TYMM positions the *Yetkin ve Erdemli* (Competent and Virtuous) student profile as a central element, defining the competencies and qualifications of students are expected to develop by the end of their educational journey (Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024). The primary objective is to raise competent (*yetkinlik*) and virtuous (*erdemli*) individuals who are not only skilled but also possess strong moral character (Akpınar, 2024). *Competence* refers to having the necessary knowledge and skills in a certain field, whereas *virtue* refers to spiritual maturity or morally praised virtues (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024).

This curriculum adopts a holistic approach that respects students' inherent characteristics and focuses on their holistic development, providing a flexible learning process based on their interests and needs, and encompasses ontological, epistemological, temporal and axiological views of holism. (Ateş, 2024; Berk & Özer, 2024; Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024).

The profile identifies ten key characteristics students should embody (Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024):

Table 3: *Yetkin ve Erdemli (Competent and Virtuous) Student Profile Elements*

Profile Characteristic	Elements
Moral (*Ahlaklı*)	Justice, respect for others' rights, honesty, reliability, respectfulness, sensitivity to environmental and social issues.
Wise (*Bilge*)	Independent thinker, eloquent, knowledge sharer, knowledge seeker, culturally and artistically conscious.
Courageous (*Cesaretli*)	Supportive, entrepreneurial, initiative-taking, risk-taker, valiant, and brave.
Aesthetic (*Estetik*)	Sensitive to beauty, mature, balanced, aware of and using artistic talents, selective, graceful.
Strong-willed (*İradeli*)	Principled, determined, assertive, confident, able to control anger, responsible, consistent.
Compassionate (*Merhametli*)	Forgiving, kind, sharing, affectionate, compassionate, helpful.
Healthy (*Sağlıklı*)	Avoids and fights addiction, practices regular exercise, sleep, and rest regularly, maintains spiritual health, eats healthily, clean.

Profile Characteristic	Elements
Inquisitive (*Sorgulayıcı*)	Investigative, critical thinker, flexible, collaborative, curious, problem solver.
Productive (*Üretken*)	Persistent, hardworking, have a dream and goal-oriented, open to communication and solidarity, eager to learn, creative.

Erdem-Değer-Eylem (Virtue-Value-Action) Framework

The TYMM approach is grounded in values and national consciousness formation to prepare morally upright future generations (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024). The Virtue-Value-Action Framework addresses students' internal moral development, adaptation to social norms, and transformation of these norms into action to foster a sense of national identity and virtuous character, transforming education's focus not only on academic achievement but also on multidimensional development (Akpınar, 2024; Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024).

This framework encompasses three key components:

1. Virtue (*erdemler*) represents characteristics that constitute ethical and moral foundations, such as justice, honesty and patience, referring to character strengths achieved through values developed throughout life.
2. Value, as defined by TYMM as "serving individuals to gain existential meaning, add meaning to life, and develop a virtuous personality structure", refers to internalization of societal norms and expectations based on national and spiritual values rooted in Turkish civilization and the universal dimension of values.
3. Action represents the transformation of virtues and values into behaviors that contribute to society (Ateş, 2024; Efe, 2024; Ministry of Education of Türkiye, 2024).

The TYMM addresses values and actions, which are sub-dimensions of virtues, as inter-program elements to raise virtuous individuals, integrated into learning-teaching activities consistent with curriculum theme from preschool education onwards, to ensure the internalization of values appropriate to students' development characteristics (Arslan & Çelikel, 2025, Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024)

Within this framework, respect, responsibility, and justice serve as core values intersecting with other values across three main dimensions: human values focusing on personal development; family and social environment values emphasizing social relationships and community participation; and physical environment values highlighting responsibility toward the environment (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024; Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024).

Comparative Analysis: Similarities and Differences in Character Education Frameworks

Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum and Turkiye's TYMM share a commitment to holistic student-centered development, placing equal emphasis on academic achievement and character development (Manalu et al., 2022; Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024). Both frameworks demonstrate a comprehensive approach to character education that incorporates Lickona's Theory (1992) on cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Indonesia's Pancasila Student Profile addresses moral knowledge through the Critical Reasoning dimension, moral feeling through the Faithful, Fearful of God dimension, and moral action through Gotong Royong (Mutual Cooperation) dimension (Kemendikbud, 2020). Similarly, Turkiye's TYMM curriculum addresses these components within its Virtue-Value-Action framework, where virtue (erdemler) cultivates moral knowledge, value (değer) develops moral feeling, and action (eylem) represents moral action (behaviors) that contribute to society (Arslan & Çelikel, 2025).

However, structural differences reveal different approaches to character development. Indonesia's Pancasila Student Profile consists of six dimensions that balance individual development with collective responsibility, integrating spiritual, social, cognitive, and creative development to reflect Indonesia's commitment to unity and diversity (Istianah et al., 2021; Kemendikbud, 2020). In contrast, Turkiye's Yetkin ve Erdemli (Competent and Virtuous) student profile presents ten characteristics with greater emphasis on national identity and virtues alongside contemporary competencies, where competence refers to having the necessary knowledge and skills, while virtue refers to spiritual maturity and morally praised virtues (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024; Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024a).

The philosophical foundations and implementation strategies reveal notable differences that reflect respective national priorities and align with Berkowitz & Bier (2005) approach to effective character education. Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum allows significant regional and school-level adaptation through its decentralized approach, aligning with Berkowitz & Bier's emphasis on creating a real-life applicable environment (Rachmawati et al., 2022). The P5 Program exemplifies this flexibility through a project-based learning approach with four key principles, including holistic, contextual, student-centered, and explorative, enabling schools to contextualize character education according to local needs and traditions (Suhardi, 2022; Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021). This approach is supported by the Pioneer Schools Program, which provides model implementations while encouragigng community collaboration (Rachmawati et al., 2022).

In contrast, Turkiye's TYMM adopts a more centralized approach with a unified national framework drawing from Turkish national heritage and spiritual values, to prioritize cultural preservation and national identity formation (Efe, 2024; Köse, 2024). The curriculum integrates competence and virtue across all education aspects through the Virtue-Value-Action Framework, which sytematically addresses internal moral development (virtue), adaptation to social norms (value), and transformation into concrete behavior (action), directly aligning with Berkowitz & Bier's approach on connecting emotional understanding with behavorial application (Arslan & Çelikel, 2025).

Table 4: Character Education Frameworks Comparative Analysis

Aspect	Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka	Turkiye's Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli
Implementation Principles	Holistic, contextual, student-centered, explorative	Ontological, epistemological, temporal, and axiological holism
Core Foundation	Pancasila values emphasize religious, cultural, and democratic principles	Turkish national heritage and spiritual values with the "Köklerden geleceğe" (From roots to future) approach
Student Profile	Pancasila Student Profile	Yetkin ve Erdemli (Competent and Virtuous) Student Profile
Student Profile Structure	6 dimensions: Faithful to God, Global Diversity, Mutual Cooperation, Independence, Critical Reasoning, Creative	10 characteristics: Moral, Wise, Courageous, Aesthetic, Strong-willed, Compassionate, Healthy, Inquisitive, Productive, Patriotic
Framework Implementation	Pancasila Student Profile integrated across intracurricular subjects and	Virtue-Value-Action Framework integration across all educational aspects

Aspect	Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka	Turkiye's Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli
Policy Structure and Implementation Strategy	the P5 program, supported by the Pioneer Schools Program Decentralized with regional adaptation through the P5 program	Centralized with a unified national framework

Incorporation of Cultural Values in Character Education

Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum demonstrates comprehensive approach to incorporating cultural values through the Pancasila Student Profile framework (Suryadien et al., 2022). The integration is systematically structured through six dimensions, with particular emphasis on the Berkebhinekaan Global (Global Diversity) dimension, balancing national and cultural identity with global competencies through recognizing and appreciating culture, developing intercultural communication skills, reflecting on diversity experiences, and promoting social justice (Kemendikbud, 2020). The Gotong Royong (mutual cooperation) dimension represents Indonesia's society collectivity through collaborative projects addressing community problems and developing entrepreneurial skills grounded in local cultural values (Rizal & Nur, 2024).

Indonesia's approach aligns with Banks' multicultural education framework on content integration by incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into various learning areas. The curriculum's contextual principles ensure cultural values are taught through real-life experiences connecting students to their local environment and community (Suhardi, 2022). The Pancasila Student Profile operates through intracuricular learning and co-curricular activities through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) program, where collaborative project-based learning fosters appreciation for Indonesia's pluralistic cultures and reinforcing national identity (Rizal & Nur, 2024; Sulistiyaningrum & Fathurrahman, 2023). The P5 project themes of the Local Wisdom and the Unity in Diversity serves as vehicle for students to explore and internalize cultural knowledge while promoting tolerance and respect for cultural diversity (Faiz et al., 2022; Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021). These projects ensures students from different cultural backgrounds explore and express their local identity while appreciating diversity thorugh activities such as preserving traditional games, local art performances, and creating products that reflect regional heritage like handicrafts or culinary dishes, to foster pride in local culture and build a sense of national unity (Haromain et al., 2023).

These flexible projects enable schools to adapt themes with regional traditions and community issues, extending learning beyond formal classroom instruction to experential learing and community engagement (Kholidah et al., 2022). For example, schools in Madiun, East Java, focus on local traditional culinary heritage, like making sambel pecel and krupuk puli, to foster tradition appreciation and strengthen local identity (Maruti et al., 2023). In Jakarta, students emphasize cultural diversity celebration, while in Bali, students learn Hindu-Balinese rituals and Tri Hita Karana philosophy, contextualizing Pancasila values within their cultural experiences (Septiany et al., 2024; Brata et al., 2024). These regionally appropriate projects integrate local cultural elements and actively promotes unity among diverse students, enhancing character development and deepening understanding of Pancasila values (Septiany et al., 2024). According to Banks (2015) emphasis on multicultural education, Indonesia successfully empowers the school culture dimension by creating educational environments bridging cultural preservation and broader social participation.

On the other hand, Turkiye's TYMM curriculum integrates cultural values through a centralized, nationally unified framework emphasizing Turkish national identity alongside spiritual and moral values, cultivating students who are academically proficient and culturally grounded (Akpınar, 2024; Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024). The TYMM strengthens national identity and historical consciousness by embedding Milli Eğitimi (National Education) throughout to promote national identity development and preserve Turkish society' collective consciousness (Efe, 2024). This approach enables character development through cultural roots while fostering sense of belonging based on societal values, aligning with the TYMM's motto of Köklerden geleceğe (From the roots to the future) (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024). Specialized subjects like T.C. İnkılâp Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük (History of Turkish Revolution and Kemalism) help students internalize national identity awareness, ensuring values are incorporated across learning areas to reinforce national belonging and maintain national identity (Tabur, 2014; Efe, 2024).

This curriculum incorporates tangible cultural heritage, connecting students with their cultural past through traditional arts, historical artifacts, and folklore throughout educational subjects (Efe, 2024). For instance, Turkish folk songs (Türküler) serve as powerful cultural transmission tools, helping students understand the history and develop a deeper connection with Turkish culture and national identity (Yavuzel (2020). Cultural heritage education, particularly on Social Studies subjects, strengthens students' sense of belonging by fostering their awareness of historical heritages and transmitting these values to future generations (Efe (2024).

The TYMM curriculum balances traditional cultural elements with contemporary educational needs through digitalization and technology integration, including digital literacy, financial awareness, critical thinking, and sustainability management skills, equipping students with national and spiritual values while preparing them for global competitiveness (Efe, 2024). TYMM's holistic approach combines epistemological, ontological, temporal, and axiological dimensions to nurture students who deeply connected to cultural roots while equipped for modern challenges (Köse, 2024). By incorporating national and spiritual values while emphasizing universal principles of character education, this approach simultaneously contributes to strengthening Turkiye's cultural identity and develops global competencies of students (Külcü, 2015).

The Role of Policy in Promoting Cultural Integration

Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum presents a clear orientation toward Berry's (2005) cultural integration approach, creating systematic frameworks that support cultural preservation and global participation by balancing national cohesion with regional cultural diversity, placed cultural identity cultivation as a central educational objective (Manalu et al., 2022). This curriculum emphasizes decentralization by dividing authority between central and regional governments. While the Ministry of Education regulates the curriculum structure at the national level, regional governments develop local policies, school vision, mission, and operational curriculum, responding to local cultural contexts (Faiz et al., 2022). This decentralized policy empowers Indonesia's cultural diversity by allowing for regionally appropriate implementations.

The "Berkebhinekaan Global" dimension in Pancasila Student Profile explicitly encourages students to maintain their cultural identity while remaining tolerant to different cultures, aligning with Indonesia's motto of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity) (Kemendikbud, 2020). The P5 Program serves as a practical tool for cultural integration, particularly with themes on Local Wisdom and Unity in Diversity, fostering students' opportunities to engage with diverse cultural elements, developing both knowledge of cultural diversity and practical experience in navigating cultural distinctiveness through real-life

learning (Rizal & Nur, 2024). This P5 project creates space for contextual implementation through the Pioneer Schools Program, encouraging collaboration between schools, parents, community leaders, and local cultural practitioners for regionally appropriate learning activities (Kemendikbud RI, 2021; Rachmawati et al., 2022). This community collaboration bridges formal education and project-based community engagement by sharing responsibility between schools and surrounding communities to ensure cultural integration is appropriate to local values.

Conversely, the Ministry of Education of Turkiye established a comprehensive educational structure through the TYMM curriculum, ensuring national identity and cultural values are consistently embedded throughout the education, maintaining standards by raising students within a shared framework of values (Efe, 2024). This curriculum serves dual roles in promoting cultural integration nationally and internationally. At the national level, TYMM serves as a powerful instrument for social cohesion by establishing a shared cultural framework. By placing national and spiritual values at the center, this curriculum enables students to strengthen national identity while developing as individuals with global responsibility (Akpınar, 2024). This curriculum adopts an inclusive approach promoting equal education opportunities to ensure that all students can access quality education under equal conditions, strengthening social integration by increasing disadvantaged groups' participation Temur 2025; Efe, 2024). This model ensures the development of individuals with social responsibility who contribute meaningfully to society, regardless of background (Temur, 2025).

Through Berry's cultural integration strategy, Turkiye's curriculum approach places greater emphasis on preserving and strengthening Turkish national identity by incorporating tangible cultural heritage and preparation for broader global participation into educational materials. TYMM plays a crucial role in preserving cultural continuity by emphasizing cultural knowledge transmission through education, helping students connect with their past and develop stronger societal belonging. The curriculum implements cultural heritage, incorporating traditional music, historical artifacts, and folklore into classroom materials, which help students recognize abstract cultural concepts, learn to protect them, and develop a consciousness for transmitting values to future generations (Efe, 2024; Yavuzel, 2020). On the international stage, TYMM serves as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy and exchange, incorporating the promotion of Türkiye's national and cultural values on international platforms as a key element (Akpınar, 2024). By raising academically, socially, and culturally equipped students, these policies increase Türkiye's soft power globally, strengthening diplomatic and economic relations by creating pathways for cultural exchange and understanding for cultural integration (Külcü, 2015).

Despite the TYMM curriculum's holistic approach, the critique remains. Akpınar et al. (2024) state that the definition, function, and scope of TYMM aim on 21st-century skills, are widely discussed, but the achievement methods remain unclear. Furthermore, the descriptions and frameworks for these skills are predominantly based on foreign literature, particularly from the United States, which raises concerns about their applicability and relevance in the Turkish context. This reliance on external sources may hinder the development of a curriculum that integrates with the cultural and social realities of Turkiye, as cultural and social dimensions, such as beliefs and values, cannot be imported but must be produced appropriately to the local context (Akpınar et al., 2024).

Discussion And Results

This study analyzed character education frameworks within Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum and Turkiye's TYMM curriculum, providing insights into how different cultural contexts shape character education policies and their effectiveness in promoting cultural integration. Both countries have developed comprehensive character education frameworks that balance universal principles with culturally specific adaptations through different structural approaches that effectively address Lickona's (1992) cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Indonesia's Pancasila Student Profile, with six dimensions, balances individual development with collective responsibility, simultaneously addressing moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action development (Kemendikbud, 2020). On the other hand, Turkiye's TYMM offers the *Yetkin ve Erdemli* (Competent and Virtuous) Student Profile through ten characteristics that emphasize both traditional virtues and contemporary competencies (Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024). Furthermore, the Virtue-Value-Action framework comprehensively addresses the Lickona principle, where virtue represents moral knowledge, value encompasses moral feeling, and action constitutes moral behavior. These differences highlight their different orientations toward character education: Indonesia's approach reflects the commitment to balancing unity and diversity, through integration of national values with respect for cultural plurality, while Turkiye's model explicitly defines the virtuous individual within the context of Turkish national identity and spiritual values.

However, the implementation strategies reveal differences in governance approaches to serve respective national contexts and educational philosophies. Indonesia's decentralized approach enables regional adaptation while maintaining national coherence through the distribution of authority between the central government (curriculum structure) and regional governments (operational implementation), creating flexibility that allows schools to contextualize character education according to regional needs and cultural traditions (Rachmawati et al., 2022).This exemplifies Berry's (2005) cultural integration strategy through explicit focus on maintaining cultural diversity within national unity. The P5 Program conceptualizes this through project-based learning that integrates character development with real-world problem solving, supported by the Pioneer Schools Program, providing model implementations that bridge formal education and real-life cultural practices, community collaboration (Kemendikbud Ristek, 2021). The *Berkebhinekaan Global* dimension and P5 program themes on *Local Wisdom* and *Unity in Diversity* align with Banks (2015) on multicultural education theory that incorporates diverse cultural perspectives, allowing schools to adapt character education to their respective cultural contexts, such as traditional culinary heritage in East Java, Betawi culture in Jakarta, and Hindu-Balinese philosophy in Bali, ensuring that cultural integration is relevant to promote both local identity and national cohesion. In contrast, Turkiye's centralized model ensures consistent national implementation, reflecting a commitment to national unity and cultural continuity (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2024). The Virtue-Value-Action framework provides a systematic approach that emphasizes the transformation of internalized values into concrete behaviors, prioritizing preservation and transmission of Turkish national identity and spiritual values, although the methods for achieving this transformation remain unclear. Turkiye's approach emphasizes the preservation and strengthening of Turkish national identity through the incorporation of cultural heritage elements, including traditional music, historical narratives, and folklore, creating connections between students and their culture that strengthen national identity and historical consciousness (Efe, 2024). This prioritizes cultural transmission and continuity while preparing students for global participation, aiming to develop individuals who are able to represent Turkish culture in global contexts.

This study presents a theoretical understanding of character education by emphasizing that the universal character education principles require cultural and contextual adaptation for

appropriate implementation. Both Indonesia and Turkiye represent alignment with character education theories, even though their implementation reflects unique cultural adaptations, national priorities, and social contexts that significantly shape the structure and goals. Indonesia's decentralized implementation offers valuable insights for pluralistic societies seeking to balance diversity with national cohesion, while Turkiye's centralized approach to the virtue development model provides a model for societies prioritizing cultural continuity and national identity formation.

Methodological significances of this study exemplify the effectiveness of comparative analysis to understand curriculum frameworks, policies, and implementation strategies in different cultural contexts, providing a replicable framework for future studies. This study offers practical implications for policymakers, highlighting the importance of aligning character education frameworks with national cultural values while maintaining flexibility for local adaptation.

Limitations and Future Research

This study's reliance on document analysis represents a limitation that suggests the need for future research incorporating classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student assessments to provide a comprehensive understanding of implementation effectiveness. Future research should investigate long-term outcomes of these approaches, particularly their effectiveness in developing citizens capable of navigating local and global contexts by examining character development and cultural identity formation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that character education in Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum and Türkiye's Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli (TYMM) is deeply shaped by each country's cultural, historical, and ideological foundations. Both curricula adopt a holistic approach to student development that integrates academic achievement with moral, social, and cultural dimensions, aligning with established character education theories that emphasize moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Indonesia's Pancasila Student Profile reflects a pluralistic orientation that balances national unity with cultural diversity through decentralized implementation, enabling contextual adaptation at regional and school levels. In contrast, Türkiye's TYMM presents a centralized framework grounded in national heritage and spiritual values, defining the ideal student through the Yetkin ve Erdemli profile and the Virtue–Value–Action framework, which emphasizes cultural continuity and national identity formation alongside contemporary competencies.

Despite their shared commitment to character education, the two models reveal distinct policy orientations and implementation strategies that reflect differing national priorities. Indonesia's flexible, project-based approach—particularly through the P5 program—illustrates how character education can function as a mechanism for cultural integration in diverse societies by accommodating local traditions within a national value framework. Meanwhile, Türkiye's centralized and value-driven approach highlights the role of education as a vehicle for transmitting cultural heritage and strengthening collective identity, although challenges remain in clarifying implementation mechanisms and contextual relevance. Overall, this comparative analysis underscores that effective character education cannot be universally standardized; rather, it must be culturally grounded and context-sensitive. The findings contribute to broader discussions on curriculum reform by illustrating how character education policies can simultaneously foster moral development, cultural integration, and global readiness when aligned with a nation's sociocultural realities

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