

Strengthening Character in the National Plus Curriculum: Its Advantages and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century is the century of information, computing, automation, and communication. Education must adapt to the era of that developing century, in particular the curriculum applied in schools. This study aims to describe the comparison of the application of the National Curriculum and the National Plus Curriculum. This research is a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The study was conducted at the Kasih Bapa Christian Elementary School, limited to respondents and research subjects related to the implementation of the curriculum in class VI which amounted to two classes, namely VI a and VI b, each of which amounted to 20 people. The number of teachers for class VI from several subjects of the study as respondents at Kasih Bapa Christian Primary School was seven. From the research that has been carried out, it was found that a form of comparison of the application of the national curriculum and the national plus curriculum on character education in class VI of Kasih Bapa Christian Elementary School, namely: First, the national curriculum based on character education leads to the challenges of the 21st century while the national curriculum plus with integrated character-based Bibles starts from the school's vision; Secondly, the national curriculum directs subjects to sub-themes while the national plus curriculum is more directed towards the introduction of the Creator who creates in an orderly manner; Third, the purpose of the national curriculum is to be able to answer the challenges of changing times while the national plus curriculum can answer the challenges of the 21st century if done consistently; Fourth, the characters achieved by the national Curriculum are only a few according to the assessment of each lesson while the characters produced by the national plus curriculum are the whole in the Bible.

Keywords: national curriculum, education, character

1. INTRODUCTION

In line with the characteristics of the 21st century and the curriculum corresponding to the 21st century, the main theme of the national curriculum is attitudes, skills, and knowledge. The implications of the education curriculum in the 21st century are certainly

many challenges of the system and the implementation of education that must be responded to. Comprehensive curriculum planning is needed, emphasizing aspects of spirituality and Christian character to anticipate the upheavals of the times.¹ A new educational concept of “National School” a plus given to the community that encouraged me.” Many people develop schools with the same concept (nationwide plus).² According to Abidin (2014:17) the characteristics of the 21st century are the century of information, computing, automation, and communication.³ Education must certainly adapt to the era of the century that is developing well regarding the curriculum applied in schools. These characteristics can be the themes carried out in the national curriculum, of course, there are a number of curriculum elements that will inevitably experience changes in meaning.

Especially at the elementary school level, the national curriculum is carried out in an integrative thematic manner at all grade levels. In the attitude dimension, attitudes are not only taught verbally but also through examples, habituation of activities, and examples. This opinion is reinforced by Rusman's view (2015:101-102) that at the elementary school level the realm of attitudes should be more or more dominantly introduced, taught and exemplified to learners, then followed by skills and realms of knowledge.⁴ Of course, this poses a challenge for teachers because teachers must be able to apply the attitudes to be learned first. The purpose of performance in the context of the national curriculum is the development of the character of students. This means that character education is the soul for the implementation of the national curriculum and the nature of this national curriculum will be the starting point for this research. One of the

¹ K Kristyana et al., “Reorganizing Christian Education After the Pandemic in Indonesia: A Need for Learning Management,” *IJECA (International Journal of Education and Curriculum Application)* 4, no. 2 (2021): 58–63.

² K Anam, “Manajemen Kurikulum Plus Di SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya,” *Inspirasi Manajemen Pendidikan* (2017), <https://jurnalmahasiswa.unesa.ac.id/index.php/37/article/download/22156/20305>.

³ Abidin, *Desain Sistem Pembelajaran Dalam Konteks Kurikulum Nasional* (Bandung: Refika Aditama, 2014).

⁴ Rusman, *Pembelajaran Tematik Terpadu* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo, 2015).

elementary schools that implements a character education curriculum is the Kasih Bapa Christian Elementary School. However, unlike schools in general that use the national curriculum, Kasih Bapa Christian Elementary School uses a curriculum that is compiled by itself and adapted to the local culture. This is the main study and the purpose of this study, describing the comparison of the application of the national curriculum and the national curriculum plus in class VI of Kasih Bapa Christian Elementary School.

The 2013 national curriculum is a competency-based curriculum that was previously initiated in the 2004 Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) stub, but has not been resolved due to the insistence on immediately implementing the 2006 Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). In addition, the curriculum arrangement in the national curriculum is carried out as the purpose of Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning national education and presidential regulation N0. 5 years 2010 on the national medium-term development plan. This means that the development of the national curriculum is a further step in the development of the 2004 Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) which was initiated in 2004 and the KTSP which includes integrated competencies of attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

According to Rusman (2015:86) the emphasis of the national curriculum is to improve the mindset, strengthen curriculum governance, deepen and expand the material, strengthen the learning process and adjust the learning load in order to ensure the conformity between what is desired and what is produced.⁵ In other words, the national curriculum is an advanced step to realize the competence of attitudes, knowledge and skills in a way that refines the mindset, strengthening and deepening the material to face the current century.

⁵ Ibid.

The national curriculum is part of responding to various internal and external challenges. Internal challenges are related to the development of the Indonesian population, which is seen from the growth of the population of productive age. Quoting from Dr. Rusman (2015:87) that the productive age (15-64 years) in Indonesia is more than the unproductive age (children aged 0-14 years and parents aged 65 years and over).⁶ According to him, the number of people of productive age will reach its peak in 2020-2035 by the time the figure reaches 70%. Therefore, education strives so that human resources are competent and skilled so that they do not become a burden on society.

Meanwhile, external challenges are related to shifts in world economic power, investment, and transformation of the education sector. Quoting from Rusman (2015:88) the achievements of Indonesian children in participating in the International Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) since 1999 are not encouraging in several reports issued by TIMSS and PISA.⁷

The national curriculum of the learning process of each theme at the elementary school level and all subjects at the junior high school/high school/vocational level is carried out with a scientific approach (scientific approach), namely the standard process in learning consists of observing, questioning, processing, presenting, concluding, and creating. In the realm of attitude, the KTSP Curriculum does not emphasize to be developed. In contrast to the national curriculum, the realm of attitude is very much considered according to Abidin (2014:16).⁸ Context learning the national curriculum begins with the formation of a good attitude towards students so that on the basis of a positive attitude in learning, students can move around through practicing certain skills

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Abidin, *Desain Sistem Pembelajaran Dalam Konteks Kurikulum Nasional*.

related to the subjects studied. Likewise, according to Rusman (2015:101) taking from Marzano (1985) and Bruner (1960) that at the elementary level the realm of attitudes must be more or more dominantly introduced, taught and exemplified in children, then followed by the realm of skills and knowledge.⁹ In the process, it goes through several stages, namely receiving, running, appreciating, living and practicing. It is in accordance with Bloom's taxonomy that the value of attitude becomes the character or lifestyle of each student.¹⁰

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The research was conducted at the Kasih Bapa Christian Elementary School, carried out and limited to respondents and research subjects related to the implementation of the curriculum in class VI which amounted to two classes, namely VI a and VI b, each of which amounted to 20 people. The participants as a source of information and data are teachers in class VI and all information related to class VI. The number of teachers for class VI from several research subjects as respondents in the Compassion of the Kasih Bapa Christian Elementary School was seven.

Data or information collection techniques through interview techniques, researchers will ask several interview questions and wherever respondents or research subjects provide evidence that includes the implementation of a character-based Bible integrated curriculum in class VI. Interview questions on the Application of the national Curriculum and the national Curriculum plus on Character Education in grade VI Kasih Bapa Christian Elementary School.

⁹ Rusman, *Pembelajaran Tematik Terpadu*.

¹⁰ DR Krathwohl et al., "II: Handbook II: Affective Domain," *library.wur.nl* (n.d.), accessed October 9, 2022, <https://library.wur.nl/WebQuery/titel/982120>.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The curriculum is not only planning that must be implemented but also as a process of realizing the objectives of the school's vision. The curriculum is a unified package of several subjects that must be carefully planned and implemented. The National Plus Curriculum, which was implemented nationwide for 10 years, transformed the National Curriculum and education system, including the certification of special needs students in public schools. This Plus National Curriculum has changed the traditional teaching style commonly found in Indonesian national schools.¹¹

The national plus Bible-integrated curriculum is a curriculum that does not have to include verses in every subject but rather the meaning contained in the Word of God. Christian values can support every subject because the nature of the Bible's integrated curriculum is very open to all subjects. It was supported by one of the respondents because with an integrated curriculum the Bible could exalt God.

If this bible-integrated curriculum is implemented consistently, it is expected to answer the challenges of the 21st century because this curriculum prioritizes practice over theory. This opinion is also supported by informant S's opinion that the Bible's integrated curriculum has answered because it is brave to take risks from what students have done seeing the challenges of the 21st century that are also changing rapidly. Dissenting from informant C said that it has not answered directly because the curriculum is nurturing from small things and can be felt if the learner is considered an adult. Meanwhile, those who argue that the (SI) seeing from the nature of the challenges is changing very quickly

¹¹ Indra Rinaldi and Yam Saroh, "THE RISE OF NATIONAL PLUS SCHOOL IN INDONESIA – EDUCATION FOR PARENTS AND GOVERNMENT," *Lingua Didaktika: Jurnal Bahasa dan Pembelajaran Bahasa* 10, no. 2 (2016).

from year to year, meaning that the curriculum must begin to adjust to the challenges that will be faced in the next few years.

Character is important for education, therefore there will be an educational purpose that directs students with character. The character to be achieved from the biblical integrated curriculum is a character of integrity as a Christian. Christian values will be a characteristic that is not only seen but felt by those around them. One of them is the nature of being responsible and respecting friends cannot be separated from the character of students.

The bible-integrated curriculum is a curriculum that does not have to include verses in each subject but rather the meaning contained in god's word. According to Khoe Yao Tung (2016:2), the definition of Christian Education is to make disciples, to move children close to God.¹² Even the characteristic of Christian education according to Daniel L. Marsh in the book Lois E. Lebar (2017:21) is that Christian education makes christian education passionate, full of enthusiasm and rejoices in the face of life.¹³ This means that an education that adheres to spiritual concepts and provides a place for God is the right education, because it invites students out of lethargy that weakens and kills spirituality. Here it can be connected that the curriculum that is the guide for the running of an education must have a passion that moves students closer even though it is not conveyed in the form of verses but the meaning based on the Bible.

Christian values can support every subject because the nature of the Bible's integrated curriculum is very open to all subjects. It was supported by one of the respondents because with an integrated curriculum the Bible could exalt God. The Bible according to his book John Stott quoted by Sidjabat (2005:35) suggests that the Bible not

¹² Khoe Yao Tung, *Filsafat Pendidikan Kristen* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi, 2016).

¹³ Lois E. Lebar, *Education That Is Chirstian: Proses Belajar Mengajar Kristiani & Kurikulum Yang Alkitabiah* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2017).

only leads its readers to faith and salvation in Jesus Christ, but also shapes, sustains, directs and renews, and unites and refreshes the life of God's church.¹⁴ The Bible is also a lamp that provides God's light to interpret various subjects in the curriculum which does not mean that teachers should include Bible verses in their studies (Edlin, 2015:130). Therefore, the Bible is not an ornament of the curriculum but as an important material that makes up the entire curriculum.

Christian values will be a characteristic that is not only seen but felt by those around them. One of them is the nature of being responsible and respecting friends cannot be separated from the character of students. In the Christian character, the nature of respecting friends can be related to the character of the fruit of the Spirit, namely love in philio's Greek, where the definition is love that is intertwined in friendship or brotherhood to others/without any blood ties (Hebrews 13:1). Whereas the responsible character can be connected with loyalty in Greek is pistis, which means not to change despite pressure and trouble, consistency, and integrity. God has a character of faithfulness. It has not changed from then to now and forever. His faithfulness allows man to endure suffering (Jer. 32:40), trials (1 Cor.10:13), persecution (1 Pet.4:12-13). Students who show loyalty in carrying out their duties not only show their sense of responsibility to the teacher who gives the task but also to God because in every learning process students are directed to the totality of exalting God through education.

Based on the data above, a form of implementation of a character-based Bible integrated curriculum was found, namely that this curriculum does not have to include verses in every subject that has been prepared by the teachers but rather the meaning contained in the Word of God. Christian values can support every subject because of the nature of the Bible's integrated curriculum open to all subjects. The implementation of

¹⁴ Samuel Sidjabat, *Strategi Pendidikan Kristen* (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2005).

this curriculum can be developed freely by subject teachers. This curriculum does not bind teaching to one character to each material but a whole aimed at exalting God. Therefore, the vision of the school and the curriculum that is being carried out must be in line.

4. CONCLUSION

From the research that has been carried out in Kasih Bapa Christian Elementary School, it was found that the form of comparison of the application of the national curriculum and the national curriculum plus about character education in class VI, namely: First, the national curriculum based on character education leads to the challenges of the 21st century while the national curriculum plus with integrated character-based Bibles starts from the school's vision; Secondly, the national curriculum directs subjects to sub-themes while the national plus curriculum is more directed towards the introduction of the Creator who creates in an orderly manner; Third, the purpose of the national curriculum is to be able to answer the challenges of changing times while the national plus curriculum can answer the challenges of the 21st century if done consistently; Fourth, the characters achieved by the national Curriculum are only a few according to the assessment of each lesson while the characters produced by the national plus curriculum are the whole in the Bible.

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