Content Analysis of Merdeka Curriculum-Based Teaching Modules in Students' Character Building Values

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Abstract

Characters education is crucial in Indonesian pedagogy to address the challenges of the 21st century, evidenced by Ministry of National Education and Culture attempts to promote character-building values in academic documents in different curriculums. Previous research has examined character values in lesson plans, syllabus, textbooks in the 2013 curriculum, and even media such as songs and movies or other literary works. However, no research has analyzed character values in teaching modules within Merdeka Curriculum. This study investigates character building values in five English language teaching modules created by student teachers, using by Ministry of National Education and Culture of character indicators which were derived from five of character building values at the stage of teaching (pre, core and post-teaching). A qualitative content analysis of the findings revealed that responsibility (42%) appeared most frequently, followed by communicative (25%), Hard Work (19%), Religious (11%), while nationalism (3%) was least represented. This result indicates that the character values in the teaching module are aligned of the national education policy, so it is worthy of review for all educators, especially for student teachers to be well-prepared and competent in designing character-based teaching modules for English learning at the high school level to build students' competencies that are intact academically and character-wise.

INTRODUCTION

Character education is considered a crucial program needed in Indonesia's education system to face the pressing issues of the current century, so it needs to balance aspects of knowledge, skills, attitudes/character, mastery of technology, and literacy (Mudrikah et al, 2022). Indonesian education prioritizes the character building of the nation's children as a key aspect that must be improved (Fitriyah et al, 2022). Education connected with character values has been proven to be the main foundation in preventing moral crises and strengthening the competence of the younger generation to become innovative, creative and competitive individuals (Noprianto, Suherdi & Muslim, 2022). Conversely, education without being accompanied by character building values is not only useless, but will very dangerous (Mudrikah et al, 2022). The cultivation of character building values has a positive impact on students' lives, such as forming harmonious relationships, reducing juvenile delinquency, reducing school dropout rates, and forming good habits (Amollo & Lilian, 2017; Klinck & Moraka, 2019; Birhan et al, 2021).

However, the issues in the Indonesian education system, specifically in learning methods, are considered inadequate and contribute to moral degradation in some schools that have not been able to meet character education standards. This is reflected in various incidents reported in the mass

media regarding the low morale of students both in the school environment and society, as well as complaints about the lack of commitment from the government to fostering student character (Angga et al., 2022). Therefore, Indonesia runs a program to strengthen student character by instilling values that promote character development, which are considered a key solution to addressing challenges within the educational system (Zurqoni, Retnawati, Apino & Anazifa, 2018). In this case, teachers hold a vital position, serving not only as educators of academic content but also as ethical role models who guide students in developing their values and character (Han, 2014; Kandiri & Arfandi, 2021). Hence, character education is the responsibility of all education stakeholders and the wider community to support students' moral and social development (Pratiwi, Mirizon & Inderawati, 2021).

The government revised the 2013 Curriculum in 2017 by prioritizing character values instead of cognitive and psychomotor aspects (Sukidin et al, 2022; Susilo et al, 2022; Purwaningsih, 2022). In the Currently implemented curriculum (Merdeka Curriculum), the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the Pancasila Student Profile Program as an effort to improve the character of the nation's children (Iskandar et al, 2023). The cultivation of these character values is also integrated through classroom learning activities in a planned and comprehensive manner (Prayitno et al, 2022; Birhan et al, 2021), as affirmed in Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 that character education programs must be integrated in learning activities at school (Wardani, 2020; Nurhana & Karima, 2022). In this case, teaching modules are an important tool that contains the design of the learning process to assist teachers in delivering material to students (Maulida, 2022; Ima Rahmatika & Majid, 2024; Angelina, Bistari & Halidjah, 2024). Nevertheless, teachers and student teachers still face difficulties in compiling modules that are in accordance with Merdeka Curriculum elements such as CP, TP, and ATP and have not been optimal in integrating character values holistically (Amelia et al, 2022). Whereas, teaching modules are an integral part of learning tools that determine the successful achievement of student competencies (Hadiansah, 2022; Nadya, 2023), and all teachers are required to have modules as a guide to systematic learning implementation (Ratih, 2017).

Numerous previous studies have examined character building values in different education media and curriculums, and have demonstrated the significance of integrating character values in learning. Faiziyah & Fachrurrazy (2013) found that self-confidence was the most dominant character value in EFL teachers' lesson plans of SMPN 3 Malang, while communication, tolerance, and discipline rarely appeared, indicating the need for more careful planning in the application of character values. Thoyyibah et al, (2019) identified values such as religiosity, honesty, and responsibility in learning at SMPN 1 Kebonagung, but still faced challenges in habituating students' learning habits. Ratih (2017) showed that character values in the lesson plans of SMPN 1 Banjar have been integrated in various stages of learning, but still not optimally applied in learning activities. Moreover, Nurhayya & Tamela (2021) highlighted the dominance of communication values in student teachers' lesson plans, but the lack of variety of values indicates the need for more attention in the preparation of lesson plans. Additionally, Yulia (2015) found that teachers tend to only deliver advice without a clear evaluation strategy, making the effectiveness of character value inculcation difficult to measure. Another study by Agustini (2014) identified 18 character values in the teaching module, but their implementation in the classroom was still weak, emphasizing the need for explicit integration in the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, research on textbooks by Kusramadhani (2022) and Jamaludin et al. (2021) showed that although textbooks can be a medium for character learning, there are gaps in the representation of certain values, such as the spirit of nationality, which is still minimal. Then, literary studies by Khalifatunnisa & Iftanty (2023) prove that the Sherlock Holmes story can be an effective tool in character learning, as well as the integration of character values in Islamic songs (Devi, 2023) and also in the film Aladdin (Nurhana & Karima, 2022) which is able to internalize moral values in different contexts.

Previous research has discussed character education values in various teaching media such

as textbooks, short stories, songs, movies, and other literary works, and focused on the integration of character values in the 2013 Curriculum lesson plans. However, no one has examined character values in the Merdeka Curriculum teaching module. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the integration of character building values in the Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules made by student teachers. This is important because student teachers need to have readiness in creating learning conditions, including the ability to compile teaching modules (Amelia et al., 2022). As emphasized by Mohamad et al. (2019), teachers are not only in charge of teaching, but also must be creative, responsible, and continue to learn. This research is expected to be a new contribution in making teaching modules an effective tool for integrating character values in learning as well as a useful guide for student teachers and all educators.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method which is a flexible design in analyzing character education values in teaching modules, then content analysis is applied as a systematic procedure for the analysis of written data from documents, and the process involves coding of MoE indicators, classification (making categories based on words, phrases, sentences, etc.), comparison (making connections between them), and drawing conclusions (Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2018; Krippendorff, 2018).

The determination of data sources in this study was carried out by collecting five Teaching Modules prepared by students participating in the Field Experience Practice (PPL) course in the English Education Study Program at As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University. The data collection process was carried out through documentation techniques by giving codes TM 1 to TM 5 on each module. Furthermore, the researcher read the content of the module in depth, identified keywords, phrases, or texts that reflected character values, then copied the data into the analysis table based on the learning component. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, by organizing, identifying, interpreting, and concluding character values reflected in objectives, indicators, learning activities, and assessments, referring to character value indicators from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia.

Table 1 The Data Analysis

No.	Character Values	Frequency of Occurrence	Teaching Module	Teaching Module Components	Analysis
1.	Responsibility	36 times (42%)	TM 1, TM 2, TM 3, TM 4, TM 5	Pre, Core, Post-teaching	These values are most dominant. Students are given various learning tasks and responsibilities, both individually and in groups.
2.	Communicative	21 times (25%)	TM 1, TM 2, TM 3, TM 4, TM 5	Pre, Core, Post-teaching	Students actively discuss, answer and ask questions. Teacher-student and student-student interactions support a communicative learning environment.

3.	Hard Work	16 times (19%)	TM 1, TM 2, TM 3, TM 4, TM 5	Pre, Core, Post-teaching	This is shown through teacher encouragement for students to achieve maximum learning targets and complete difficult tasks.
4.	Religious	9 times (11%)	TM 1, TM 2, TM 3, TM 4, TM 5	Pre and Postteaching	Visible from the habituation of greetings, prayers before and after learning. Describes gratitude and good morals.
5.	Nationalism	3 times (3%)	TM 1, TM 2, TM 3,	Preteaching	This value is still very limited. Only mentioned through the implementation of the Pancasila learner profile, not yet touching the content or core activities.

RESULT

The results of the data obtained on 5 character building values that appear in the process of collecting and analyzing data from the five student teaching modules, namely religious, hard work, responsibility, nationalism, and communicative. TM 1, TM 2, TM 3, TM 4, and TM 5 integrate four (4) character building values namely religious, hard working, responsibility, communicative in each learning step (Pre, Core, and Post-teaching). Meanwhile, the value of nationalism is integrated only in TM 1, TM 2 and TM 3 in pre-teaching activities. The percentage results are visible in the figure below:
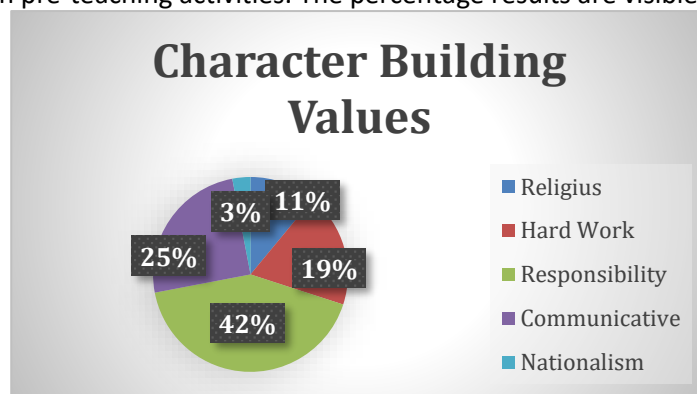

Figure 1 Frequency of Character Building Values

The findings of each character value integrated in the teaching module, 5 TM have implemented religious character values at the pre and post-teaching stages, as quoted in the sentence *"Pendidik memulai proses belajar dengan mengucapkan salam kepada siswa", "Pendidik menyambut siswa dengan sapaan hangat dan menanyakan kondisi mereka", "Pendidik membimbing siswa untuk memanjatkan doa sebelum pelajaran dimulai", "Pendidik menutup sesi pembelajaran dengan menyampaikan pesan inspiratif serta dorongan untuk tetap giat*

belajar, kemudian mengajak siswa berdoa bersama".

The religious value reflects that teachers accustom students to have a sense of gratitude for their nature as humans created by God to carry out their obligations to study as students. Character value of hard work are also revealed in all 5 TM stages of learning indicated in the sentence.

"Pendidik memotivasi siswa untuk tercapainya kompetensi", "Peserta didik dapat mengelompokkan kalimat yang menunjukkan saran dan tawaran dengan ketepatan 100%", "Peserta didik dapat mengidentifikasi kalimat yang mengandung aktivitas saran dan tawaran dengan sebaik-baiknya", "Peserta didik dapat mengerjakan soal dengan tepat", "Siswa mampu memberikan kesimpulan materi yang telah dipelajari dengan baik dan benar".

The sentences have an implied meaning that students need to be determined in learning and the teacher expects students to complete tasks as well as possible as an effort of hard work.

Responsibility value is reflected in all 5 TM stages, in the pre-teaching stage it is shown in the sentence.

"Pendidik melakukan pengecekan terhadap kehadiran siswa di kelas", "Pendidik menjelaskan sasaran atau target yang ingin dicapai dalam proses pembelajaran", "Pendidik menyiapkan presentasi materi dalam bentuk slide PowerPoint sebagai media pembelajaran", and "Peserta didik memperlihatkan sikap siap dan antusias untuk mengikuti proses pembelajaran."

This is indicate that responsibility is applied through students' attendance, preparation, and awareness in the lesson. Moreover, the character value of responsibility has also been integrated at the core-teaching stage.

"Peserta didik diberikan kesempatan selama 10 menit untuk mencermati materi secara mendalam", "Pendidik menginstruksikan siswa untuk mencatat secara rinci kata-kata yang mereka dengarkan", "Peserta didik diarahkan untuk menyelesaikan tugas pada lembar kerja yang terdapat di buku", and "Pendidik menetapkan waktu selama 20 menit bagi siswa untuk menyelesaikan soal-soal yang diberikan."

This phase indicates that students are required to be responsible in completing tasks, understanding the material, and contributing to learning. Then, the character value of responsibility in post-teaching is expressed in the sentence.

"Peserta didik diminta untuk mengajukan pertanyaan terhadap materi yang belum dipahami", "Pendidik memberikan kesempatan siswa untuk memberikan kesimpulan materi", "Peserta didik diminta untuk mengungkapkan pendapatnya terkait materi pembelajaran yang telah dilaksanakan", "Pendidik memberikan pekerjaan rumah untuk dikerjakan oleh peserta didik dalam sebuah LKPD", and "Peserta didik menyampaikan informasi terhadap materi yang akan dipelajari pada pertemuan mendatang."

Responsibility is applied at this stage through reflection, evaluation, and preparing students for further learning. Moreover, the communicative value is found in the 5th TM, the pre-teaching stage is demonstrated in the sentence

"Pendidik memberikan siswa kesempatan untuk menjelaskan kegiatan pertemuan lalu", and *"Peserta didik menjawab dan menjelaskan materi pertemuan lalu berdasarkan pemahamannya."*

This means that communicative value exists when teachers and students interact to build a conducive learning setting. Meanwhile, the core-teaching stage is evidenced in the sentence *"Peserta didik menjawab pertanyaan yang diajukan oleh guru", "Siswa menjelaskan hasil interpretasi yang*

diperoleh", *"Peserta didik melaksanakan kegiatan diskusi tentang materi"*, *"Peserta didik memberikan tanggapan dan umpan balik kepada teman sekelas tentang presentasi mereka",* and *"Peserta didik secara berpasangan mendiskusikan terkait cerita yang didengar sebelumnya."*

The communicative character needs to be applied at this stage when students convey ideas, discuss in groups, and develop their understanding through interaction. In addition, the post-teaching stage is marked in the sentence.

"Peserta didik menjelaskan kesimpulan dari hasil pemahaman terhadap materi yang telah dipelajari", "Peserta didik mengajukan pertanyaan kepada guru" and *"Pendidik mengajak siswa untuk berdiskusi dan mereview materi yang telah dipelajari."*

At this point, communicative characters are found when students convey conclusions, ask questions, and discuss the material that has been learned. Last, the character value of nationalism rarely appears and only exists in 3 TM (TM 1, TM 2 and TM 3) in pre-teaching activities, represented in the sentence.

"Pembelajaran didasari dengan implementasi dimensi profil pelajar Pancasila."

At this stage the value of nationalism is applied through the implementation of the dimensions of the Pancasila learner profile as a foundation and form of practicing national values in learning activities, but aspects of nationalism are less integrated in learning than other character values.

The overall character value of responsibility is the character value that appears most in the teaching module with the highest frequency of 36 times or 42%, the second highest frequency of appearance is communicative value 21 times or 25%, then the character value of hard work is integrated in the teaching module 16 times or 19%, the third character value is found in learning activities (Pre, core and post-teaching), while religious character value is found 9 times or 11% only in pre and post-teaching. On the other hand, the value of nationalism is the value that appears the least with a frequency of 3 times or 3% in pre-teaching.

DISCUSSION

Five character building values have been found in the five teaching modules for student teachers, namely religious values, hard work, responsibility, communicative which are integrated in TM 1, TM 2, TM 3, TM 4 and TM 5, and nationalism values which are integrated in TM 1, TM 2, TM 3.

First, the value of religious character is reflected in the activities of teachers and students who make a habit of opening learning activities with greetings and salutations. The expressions and activities are found in the pre-teaching stage to connect learning with moral teachings that are in accordance with religious values, instill a humble attitude and respect for God before starting learning. In addition, at the post-teaching stage, religious character values are revealed in the activities of teachers and students who ended learning activities with prayer. Religious values are consistently applied through pre and post-teaching in each teaching module with the aim of instilling spiritual awareness in the learning process, so that students not only gain knowledge but also develop character based on religious values. As in previous research by Nurhayya & Tamela (2021), religious character values are implemented in the teaching module at the pre and post-teaching stages in the teacher's activities of greeting and asking how students are, praying activities to start and end learning sessions.

Second, the character value of hard work is reflected in sentences that contain elements of persistence, perseverance, and maximum effort in understanding and completing learning tasks. In pre-teaching, core-teaching, and post-teaching, the value of hard work is applied through readiness to learn, effort in understanding the material, as well as reflection and additional exercises to deepen understanding. Core-Teaching is the most dominant stage in the application of hard work, because

students are required to actively read, write, speak, and complete tasks with full effort. Previous research by Ratih (2017) explained that the value of hard work is reflected in teacher activities that ask students to focus and try to understand the learning objectives in order to be ready for the tasks that will be given, students are invited to be able to analyze and understand the structure of procedure text, and student behavior that shows they can do the task with 100% accuracy.

Third, the implementation of the character value of responsibility begins at the pre-teaching stage, namely the teacher's activity in checking attendance and conveying learning objectives, this reflects the teacher's responsibility to prepare and start learning in class. Then, at the core-teaching stage, the value of responsibility is applied in completing tasks, working together in groups, and submitting work results correctly and on time, also at the post-teaching stage, the character value of responsibility is applied through reflection activities, evaluation, and preparation of students for further learning. Previous research mentioned by Thoyyibah, Hartono & Anggani (2019); Nurhayya & Tamela (2021) that the value of hard work was found in the activities of students who were given 10 minutes to work on assignments, given the opportunity to provide conclusions and express opinions, and the teacher conveyed information related to the material to be learned on the upcoming schedule.

Additionally, communicative character value reflects students' ability to interact well, express opinions, understand and respond to information effectively. In learning, this value is revealed in all stages (pre, core and post-teaching), namely discussion activities, presentations, Q&A, and material reflection. As stated by Yulia (2015), communicative value is revealed in activities that require students to be communicative or participate in using English, for example when the teacher asks students to answer some questions about the learning material. In addition, communicative character value has great potential to encourage students to establish real communication between teachers and students or between one student and another (Farid, 2017). This value also has an essential for teachers in creating effective communication as a teacher in the classroom, and also for effective promotion of student learning (Ling, Chong, & Farid, 2017).

Lastly, the character value of nationalism reflects the attitude of loving the country, appreciating the nation's culture, and applying national values in daily life. As revealed in the pre-teaching stage that teachers insert the dimensions of the Pancasila learner profile in learning activities as a form of student practice to characterize the values of Pancasila. Previous research by Agustini (2014) implied the value of nationalism in implementing the dimensions of the Pancasila learner profile within learning activities, as well as providing materials that can contribute to the progress of the nation.

The overall analysis shows that the character value of responsibility has a higher frequency of occurrence compared to other character values, namely 36 times or 42% in the sentences revealed at all stages (pre, core and post-teaching). This is due to the fact that responsibility is the foundation that every student needs to have in making decisions and solving problems independently, they will get used to finding solutions when facing challenges in learning, and take the initiative to complete their tasks without waiting for instructions from other parties (Ratih, 2017). While the character value that appears the least is Nationalism only 3 times, this means that the aspect of nationalism has not been emphasized much in learning, so as a recommendation so that the nationalism character value remains integrated in the teaching module, it can integrate the Pancasila Student Profile more explicitly in learning activities, and can be linked between learning materials with national values, for example in invitation material, an example of an invitation to a traditional event or national celebration can be given.

Moreover, despite the 5 main values that have been found in the teaching module, there are certain character building values that have not been investigated further in the teaching module, such as Honest, Tolerance, Discipline, Creative, Independent, Democratic, Curiosity, Love for the country, Respect for achievement, Peace love, Love to read, Care for the environment, and Social care that need

to be applied so that they can live harmoniously in various types of environments. The Ministry of Education and Research through the guidelines for the preparation of teaching modules stipulates that character values can be adjusted to the learning outcomes, then sequencing based on indicators of the achievement of the most important character values, as the results described in this study that religious values are still something that is less emphasized implicitly or explicitly.

In fact, in English language learning, religious values need to be positioned in the first place, because it is considered as a basis that supports the development of students' character and strengthens the integration of character values in the learning process. This is also related to the culture and beliefs adopted in the educational environment, so that religious values become the top priority in shaping the character of learners holistic.

CONCLUSION

According to the results of the research, it is concluded that the integration of character building values in teaching modules has crucial role in shaping students' attitudes and skills. Character values such as religion, hard work, responsibility, communicative, and nationalism contribute to improving the quality of learning and building a better student personality. As a result of the research, the character value of responsibility is the character value with the highest frequency of occurrence compared to other character values in the five teaching modules for student teachers, while the character value that appears the least is nationalism.

The research confirms that the application of character values in teaching modules not only improves academic aspects, but also shapes students' better character in life in various fields. It is necessary for educators to continue to develop learning strategies that are oriented towards character building in order to create a generation that excels in academics, interests or talents, and even morals.

In line with Ratih's research (2017); Nurhayya & Tamela (2021) explained that learning activities (pre, core and post-teaching) are the teaching module components that contain the most character building values, therefore teachers and student teachers need to pay attention to the integration of character values in compiling teaching modules.

The following are some suggestions submitted by researchers for further research 1) as technology becomes more sophisticated, future research can identify how character values are integrated in digital media such as e-modules, learning videos, educational applications, or other learning platforms; 2) since this research is limited to analyzing learning activities in teaching modules, future researchers are advised to investigate and compare other components such as types of character-based learning models, including project-based learning, problem-based learning, or discussion methods, to see their effectiveness in shaping student character; and 3) since this study was limited to teaching modules made by students majoring in English, future researchers are advised to investigate character building values in teaching modules of student teachers with different backgrounds.

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