

Student Reflections on PPL in The Application of Deep Learning, Character Education and Good Habits in Elementary Schools: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Character education and deep learning are important issues in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools. This study aims to explore the integration of deep learning, character education, and good habits in the Field Experience Practice (PPL) of students. A qualitative approach with a case study design was used in this study, involving interviews, observations, and document analysis as data collection techniques. The results of the study indicate that the integration of these three aspects contributes to the development of students' character, improves critical thinking skills, and strengthens moral and social values. Habits such as prayer and memorization, as well as extracurricular activities, play an important role in shaping students' character. This study contributes to the development of a more holistic character-based education curriculum that emphasizes not only academic achievement but also character building. Further research is recommended to explore quantitative measurements of this integration in a broader

Keywords: *deep learning, character education, good habits*

INTRODUCTION

Practical Field Experience (PPL) plays an important role in shaping the competence of prospective teachers through direct experience in classroom management and learning (Hidayat et al., 2023). PPL provides an opportunity for students to implement the theories they have learned in class into real practice in elementary schools (Sugiyono, 2023). This is increasingly relevant with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which requires the application of deep learning methods to improve the quality of learning in elementary schools (Wulandari et al., 2023). Deep learning is expected to improve students' understanding in depth, which is in line with character development and the cultivation of good attitudes that form the

foundation for the formation of positive attitudes among students (Hidayat et al., 2023).

Deep learning in the context of education is an approach that prioritizes deep conceptual understanding and the application of knowledge in relevant and complex situations (Bria et al., 2024). This aims to encourage students not only to remember information, but also to understand and relate it to real-life experiences (Hidayat et al., 2023). In the independent curriculum, deep learning includes problem solving, idea exploration, and critical reflection on the learning process, enabling students to develop higher-order thinking skills (Kolb, 2024). The implementation of deep learning requires the active involvement of students in the learning process, with challenging tasks to engage them in innovative and evidence-

based solution-seeking (Wulandari et al., 2023). This supports character development because students not only learn to understand the material but also to act on that understanding in real life, which also contributes to the habit of positive attitudes (Bria et al., 2024).

The current demands of the independent curriculum not only cover academic aspects aimed at improving students' cognitive understanding, but also character building aspects that are important in creating individuals with integrity (Bria et al., 2024). Character learning does not only focus on moral knowledge, but also on developing attitudes and behaviors that support sustainable moral values. The proposed approach encompasses three main dimensions, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, which help students understand, feel, and carry out actions that reflect these moral values in their daily lives (Lickona, 2023). Therefore, it is important for teachers to adopt a holistic approach in educating students, where intellectual development and character building go hand in hand to prepare students to face real-world challenges.

Student reflections on their teaching practice placements are an integral part of the evaluation and self-improvement process, serving to evaluate and improve their teaching practices in the field. This reflection process allows students to connect their experiences with the theories they have learned, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and plan improvements to achieve broader educational goals, as described by (Dewey, 2022) in his theory of reflection. This reflection also serves as a means to enhance teacher professionalism and improve the quality of teaching in a more conscious and focused manner.

In fact, student reflection in PPL has been widely discussed, but there is still a gap in research examining the integration of these three important aspects, namely deep learning, character education, and good habits (Maimunah & Jannah, 2024). Several previous studies have focused more on each aspect separately (Wulandari et al., 2023). Meanwhile, understanding of how these three

aspects interact in the context of student reflections in PPL is still minimal (Kawiana et al., 2019). This study aims to fill this gap by examining how PPL students reflect on their experiences related to the integration of these three aspects in their teaching.

Dewey's Theory of Reflection (Reflection as a Learning Tool) and Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning (Learning by Doing and Reflecting) provide an important foundation for analyzing how students can evaluate their experiences in field practice and plan for future improvements (Kolb, 2024). There is research stating that reflection helps individuals connect past experiences with future learning (Dewey, 2022). In addition, Kolb's theory of experiential learning emphasizes the importance of reflection as a key stage in effective learning (Kolb, 2024). Lickona's concept of character education will also be an important framework for understanding how student character can be shaped through educational practices that involve the habit of good attitudes and moral education (Lickona, 2023).

Reflection process during teaching practice in elementary schools. The main focus of this study is to identify how students perceive their experiences in implementing these three aspects and how they overcome challenges in learning that focuses on student character development (Bria et al., 2024). Thus, this study is expected to contribute new insights to the development of educational science, particularly in relation to reflection as a self-evaluation tool for prospective teachers.

Practical objectives, the findings of this study are expected to provide insights for the development of teacher education curricula, especially in emphasizing the importance of integrating deep learning, character education, and good habits in PPL. These findings are also expected to provide input for education managers to create an environment that supports the development of better teacher competencies in managing character-based learning (Wulandari et al., 2023). This research can also help PPL program administrators improve the quality of student

reflection in developing their abilities to face challenges in the field.

From a theoretical perspective, this study will contribute to educational literature by introducing an integrative model of three important aspects of teacher education. This study will also enrich the understanding of Dewey and Kolb's reflection theory by providing empirical evidence of how the theory is applied in the context of character education and good habits in elementary schools. Therefore, this study is expected to serve as a reference for further research examining integrative aspects in teacher education.

The importance of reflection in PPL also has a direct impact on the professional development of prospective teachers. This study aims to find findings that can improve the quality of student reflection and support their professional development in facing the demands of a more holistic and character-based curriculum (Hidayat et al., 2023). Thus, this study is expected to be beneficial not only for prospective teachers but also for the education community in general who want to improve the quality of education in elementary schools.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore and understand the reflective experiences of students participating in Field Experience Practice (PPL) in the context of basic education, as well as to explore in depth aspects related to learning, character education, and good habits. The case study design was used to gain a better understanding of the phenomena occurring in the partner school, namely SD Muhammadiyah 1 Krian, which was the location of the research (Sugiyono, 2023). This study aims to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of students' reflections during PPL and to identify factors that influence their experiences in integrating deep learning, character education, and good habits.

The research subjects were PPL students who had undergone practical training at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Krian. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling, in which participants were selected based on specific criteria, namely students who were involved in PPL at the school and had completed their practicum within a period of 5 weeks or 23 days. Supporting informants in this study included supervising teachers, supervising lecturers, and students at SD Muhammadiyah 1 Krian. The selection of these informants aims to obtain richer data and triangulation from various perspectives to strengthen the research results (Sugiyono, 2023).

The data collection techniques used in this study include semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and participatory observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the experiences and reflections of PPL students, as well as their understanding of the deep learning process and character development during PPL. Participatory observation was conducted to directly monitor students' teaching practices in the classroom, while document analysis included a study of students' reflection notes, daily journals, and PPL reports as secondary data.

These techniques were chosen to collect more complete and valid data on students' experiences during PPL (Sugiyono, 2023).

In data analysis, this study used Miles & Huberman's interactive analysis model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. The data reduction process was carried out by filtering relevant information from interviews, observations, and collected documents. Data presentation was carried out by compiling the data in a systematic form so that it was easy to understand. Conclusion drawing or verification is done to identify the main themes that emerge from the data and to verify the conclusions that can be drawn. This procedure allows for an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the reflective experiences of PPL students (Miles & Huberman, 2020).

To ensure data validity, this study uses triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing

data obtained from various informants, techniques are carried out by combining interviews, observations, and document analysis, while time triangulation is carried out by collecting data at various times to check the consistency of the findings. In addition, member checks and audit trails will be used to verify and ensure the credibility of the research results (Sugiyono, 2023). This study is expected to produce valid and reliable findings to explore the integration of deep learning, character education, and reflection in the teaching practices of student teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identifies and analyzes various findings related to the implementation of curricula and learning programs at the elementary school level, especially those based on character development and life skills for students. The main findings in this study include the structure of learning time, educational programs, and habits practiced in schools. In the section on Learning Time Structure, based on the findings, main learning activities in schools are carried out from Monday to Thursday, with a focus on academic learning in the classroom, while Friday is focused on extracurricular activities that support the development of students' character and social skills. This serves to maintain a balance between students' cognitive and affective development. Extracurricular activities held on Fridays, such as Tapak Suci and Hizbul Wathan, provide opportunities for students to develop leadership and Islamic values consistent with broader character education goals (Kementerian Pendidikan Riset, dan Teknologi, 2024). The Education Program in Each Class is as follows:

1. Early Grades (1–2): Focus on developing life skills and observing objects. In this class, students are taught to practice independence in daily tasks such as folding clothes and recognizing simple objects (e.g., milk cartons). These activities aim to develop students' ability to describe objects in simple language and improve early science literacy (Mulyadi, 2019).
2. Middle School (3–4): In addition to strengthening life skills, third-grade students also participate in Tapak Suci activities as part

of their extracurricular activities to improve self-discipline and physical fitness, while fourth-grade students participate in the Hizbul Wathan program for leadership and nationalism development (TurComat, 2021).

3. Upper Class (5): At this level, extracurricular programs are more tailored to students' interests. Students have more freedom to choose activities that suit their interests, which serves as a way to intrinsically motivate them to pursue their greater potential (Lickona, 1991).

Morning Routine: Every morning, all students undergo a routine that begins with morning assembly, prayer, and recitation of the Six Pillars of Faith and Five Pillars of Islam, the Muhammadiyah student pledge, and Pancasila. In addition, they are also involved in memorizing the Qur'an and hadith, which is done in moving classes for grades 2–6, while grade 1 students continue to do this activity in their respective classrooms. This habit is not only intended to foster discipline but also to instill essential spiritual values in shaping student's character (Kementerian Pendidikan Riset, dan Teknologi, 2024).

Program Summary Table & Intended Outputs

Class	Program Focus	Example Activities	Targeted Competencies/ Output
1-2	Life skill & Observation	Folding clothes; observing milk cartons & recording	Basic independence, early science literacy, descriptive skills
3	Life skill + Tapak Suci	Physical training & discipline of silat	Discipline, cooperation, self-confidence
4	Hizbul Wathan	Value-based scouting activities	Leadership, nationalism, Islamic character
5	Extracurricular activities based on interests	Clubs/student organizations based on talents	Strengthening interests and talents, intrinsic motivation
1-6	Spiritual habituati	Prayer, memorizati	Value habituation, self-

(mor ning)	on & literacy	on, moving class	regulation, readiness to learn
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Learning Time Structure and Its Implications. The learning time structure, which is divided between Monday to Thursday for core learning and Friday for extracurricular activities, plays an important role in maintaining a balance between academic needs and character building for students. This schedule not only provides opportunities for cognitive development in the classroom but also gives students time to hone their soft skills, which are very much needed in real life. This policy is in line with holistic education theory, which suggests that education should not only emphasize intellectual intelligence, but also moral character, social skills, and emotional management in students. By allocating one day a week for extracurricular activities such as Tapak Suci and Hizbul Wathan, the school ensures that students develop not only academically, but also physically, emotionally, and socially. These activities encourage character building based on Islamic values and leadership, in line with the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on developing well-rounded individuals. Strengthening interests and talents, intrinsic motivation (Kementerian Pendidikan Riset, dan Teknologi, 2024).

The Importance of Morning Routines in Character Education. Morning routines at school, which involve morning assembly, prayer, and memorization of the Qur'an, have many dimensions in shaping students' character. This routine is a very effective way to start the day positively and with focus. According to character education theory (Lickona, 1991), the formation of good character cannot be separated from daily habits. Morning prayers and recitations become habitual, and through repetition, students build self-regulation and spiritual awareness. This routine also creates a calmer and more orderly school climate, which helps students be more prepared to learn. In educational psychology, habitual routines based on values like this are often directly related to better academic performance, because students who have

good emotional regulation are better able to focus and face learning challenges (Lickona, 1991).

Life Skills Program in Early Grades (1-2) and Its Impact on Independence: Early grades (1-2) have a very strong program for building the foundation of students' life skills. One of the main activities is training students to fold clothes and observe objects such as milk cartons to build their observation skills. At this age, skills like these can teach independence and attention to detail, which are important skills for the future. Science literacy is also introduced here in a very practical and relevant way, allowing students to not only learn science but also to think analytically and descriptively. According to (Mulyadi, 2019), life skills education is very important in building basic skills that prepare students for everyday life and the world of work. In this context, the program in the early grades not only provides students with practical skills but also builds a foundation for better self-regulation. The ability to regulate oneself from an early age is crucial in preparing them for greater academic and social challenges in the future.

One of the mandatory extracurricular activities is Tapak Suci and Hizbul Wathan as Character Building Vehicles. Extracurricular activities such as Tapak Suci and Hizbul Wathan serve more than just physical activities or scouting. Both activities are platforms for character development that not only train physical skills but also mental discipline, teamwork, and leadership. Tapak Suci, for example, as a martial art that emphasizes discipline and self-control, teaches students to manage their emotions, maintain focus, and strengthen their winning mentality. Similarly, Hizbul Wathan not only trains leadership skills but also introduces the values of nationalism, patriotism, and togetherness. These two programs strongly support the concept of character education introduced in the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes that education should develop the full potential of students in both cognitive and affective areas (Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology, 2024). The character and leadership

instilled through these two activities are crucial, considering that students are not only prepared for academic exams but also to become responsible citizens who actively participate in society.

Qur'an Literacy and Habituation: Implications for Character Building and Learning Readiness. Qur'an literacy implemented in the morning not only aims to introduce students to spiritual values, but also has a major influence on their self-regulation and discipline. This program involves not only memorization but also understanding the meaning of each verse, which enriches students' emotional and spiritual intelligence. By integrating religious education into daily routines, schools not only educate students to be smart but also to have good character (Lickona, 1991). In this case, religious education does not only focus on cognitive aspects (memorization) but also on affective aspects (appreciation of values). This allows students to internalize moral values in their daily lives, which will later play a role in the moral decisions they make throughout their lives.

Implications of School Policy and Relevance to the Merdeka Curriculum. The implementation of these habits and extracurricular programs provides valuable insights for educational policy in other schools. By placing character as an integral part of the daily curriculum, schools focus not only on exam results but also on student character, which is an inseparable part of true education. This policy supports the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes the formation of the Pancasila Student Profile (PPP) by fostering faith, piety, discipline, and independence from an early age.

In understanding the results of this study, it is important to refer to several key theoretical frameworks that underlie the development of learning programs and student character.

1. **Character Education**(Lickona, 1991) : According to Lickona, character education is highly dependent on habit formation, which is acquired through consistent daily practice.

Programs implemented in schools, such as prayer, memorization, and observation of objects, are concrete examples of character habituation. These activities provide students with opportunities to actively engage in the development of moral and social values, which will continue in their daily lives. This habituation process contributes to the formation of positive character that can be applied outside the school environment.

2. **Merdeka Curriculum & Pancasila Student Profile (PPP):** With the adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum, there is an emphasis on holistic learning that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. This research is in line with the objectives of the Pancasila Student Profile (PPP), which expects students to become individuals who are not only intelligent but also have faith/morals, independence, and the ability to work together and think critically. The programs implemented, such as life skills, Tapak Suci, and Hizbul Wathan, contribute directly to the achievement of these PPP objectives, especially in shaping a strong character (Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology, 2024).

3. **Life Skills Education** (Mulyadi, 2019) : Emphasis on life skills at the elementary school level, as implemented in early grade programs, is very important in developing the basic skills needed for everyday life. Programs such as folding clothes not only teach independence but also self-regulation, which is the ability to manage oneself and simple tasks independently.

Interpretation of Findings

1. **Early Grades (1–2):** Life skills and observation programs implemented in early grades give students the confidence to perform daily tasks independently. This process not only helps them practically, but also introduces them to higher science concepts. These activities facilitate multidimensional learning, which involves cognition (observation), affect (feelings towards activities), and psychomotor skills (physical abilities in daily tasks) simultaneously.
2. **Middle School (3–4):** Extracurricular activities such as Tapak Suci help students develop discipline and courage, while Hizbul Wathan gives students the opportunity to strengthen their national identity and group cohesion. These activities foster social awareness and leadership, which greatly support the formation of students' identities as responsible citizens.

3. Morning Routines: Morning routines such as prayer and memorization help calm students and prepare them to learn with a clear mind. This is in line with the theory of self-regulation in character education, which states that success in learning is influenced by the ability to manage emotions and attention (Lickona, 1991).

The Influence of Extracurricular Activities on Character Building. Extracurricular activities at school do not only focus on physical and technical aspects, but also have a broader impact on character building among students. Tapak Tapak Suci and Hizbul Wathan, as value-based extracurricular activities, are highly effective in shaping leadership, discipline, and self-confidence. In the context of Tapak Suci, martial arts involving self-control and emotional control play an important role in shaping students' resilient and persevering characters. The results of the study also show that these extracurricular activities strengthen teamwork among students and develop a sense of responsibility towards the group. As explained by (TurComat, 2021), participation in scouting and martial arts activities builds the leadership mentality needed in social and professional life. In addition, these activities also instill positive values, such as honesty, togetherness, and generosity, which are very important in shaping the character of students. This also emphasizes the importance of a more comprehensive values-based education in shaping individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also strong in character.

Integration of Character Education in Formal and Informal Curricula. In addition to extracurricular programs, character education implemented in the classroom also plays a very important role. Learning based on Islamic values integrated with academic teaching helps students not only understand theory but also apply these values in their daily lives. The habit of praying, memorizing, and reciting the Rukun Iman and Rukun Islam gives students a strong sense of responsibility for the tasks they undertake. The Merdeka Curriculum, which places greater emphasis on character-based education, is in line with the principle of integrating moral and cognitive values in learning activities. This habit also involves important social skills, such as the ability to interact with others, manage conflicts, and work in teams, all of which are very much needed in an increasingly complex society. The results of this study also illustrate how a character-based curriculum plays a very large role in helping students develop a

balanced personality between academic competence and moral values. According to the Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology (2024), a curriculum based on the Pancasila Student Profile (PPP) enables students to develop moral and social competencies that are crucial for their future as responsible members of society.

The Role of Habituation and Strengthening Values in Shaping Student Character. Habituation of values from an early age, as applied through memorization of the Qur'an and hadith, has a major impact on strengthening moral values in students. This program not only builds cognitive skills (memorization), but also develops spiritual values that provide guidance for students in facing the challenges of everyday life. For example, when students engage in memorization activities that involve instilling values, they not only memorize words, but also internalize the meanings contained in the verses or hadiths they learn. According to Lickona (1991), character education cannot be separated from positive habits practiced in daily life. These habits encourage students to recognize the moral values that are important in their lives and give them the ability to act based on these values, both in academic and social contexts. By accustoming students to reading and memorizing verses from the Qur'an every morning, the school ensures that spiritual and moral values become an integral part of their character formation.

Developing Student Independence through Life Skills Education Life skills programs implemented in early grades (1-2), such as folding clothes and observing simple objects, not only help students develop independence in their daily lives, but also equip them with cognitive skills that are very important in the learning process. In this case, self-regulation and self-management are taught from an early age. This program also creates opportunities for students to develop their abilities in observing, describing, and problem solving. According to (Mulyadi, 2019), life skills education at the elementary level helps students develop personal and social skills that will be useful in the future, both in the context of formal education and social life. This program gives students greater confidence in carrying out their daily activities, from completing simple tasks to managing their emotions in more challenging situations.

Sustaining Character Building in Everyday Learning. Character building in schools is not limited to activities carried out at the beginning of the day or in extracurricular programs, but continues throughout the day through students' interactions with teachers, friends, and the school environment. As seen in values-based learning practices in schools, every activity at school is an opportunity to introduce and reinforce important moral values. When teachers and students interact in academic and social activities, these values are reinforced through positive communication and respectful interactions. The continuity of this habit formation strengthens students' overall character, which ultimately impacts their readiness to face future challenges. Programs based on moral values help students to be better prepared to face social and academic pressures, as well as to become resilient and principled individuals.

Relevance to Character Education and Holistic Theory. Overall, the findings of this study underscore the importance of comprehensive character education, which integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects into every learning activity. By instilling moral values from an early age, schools not only prepare students for academic success, but also to become individuals of character, who are ready to overcome life's challenges with a positive and responsible attitude. This more holistic approach to education, which supports the integration of academic learning and character building, is highly relevant to the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile. This curriculum emphasizes not only academic achievement but also the formation of strong character in students, promoting values such as diversity, cooperation, discipline, and leadership.

Based on the results of this study, there are several important implications:

1. Academic: Learning that integrates character and social skills into the daily curriculum can strengthen a more comprehensive and holistic learning process. This enables students to be

better prepared to face academic and social challenges. This concept is highly relevant to the Merdeka Curriculum, which focuses on developing all aspects of students.

2. School Policy: Daily routines such as prayers and memorization, as well as extracurricular activities such as Tapak Suci, can be an integral part of the character curriculum implemented in schools. This provides a strong foundation for other schools that wish to adopt a values-based approach to learning.

Factors that influence results. Several factors that may influence the results of these programs are: Parental and community involvement in supporting character education at home. Availability of facilities and infrastructure that support the implementation of extracurricular activities and habits. Consistency in the implementation of programs by teachers and extracurricular advisors.

Research Limitations This study is descriptive-qualitative in nature and does not have a control group that would allow for causal conclusions to be drawn about the effectiveness of the program. For future research, it is important to use a more structured experimental design with a control group or pre-test/post-test to obtain more measurable results. Suggestions for Future Research. For future research, it is recommended that: Standardized instruments for measuring PPP achievement be used to quantitatively assess students' character and social skills. Long-term evaluations be conducted to examine the program's impact on students' performance outside the classroom, such as test scores and social success.

CONCLUSION

This study provides important insights into how the integration of deep learning, character education, and good habits can have a significant impact on the quality of education at the elementary school level. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, these three aspects not only affect students' academic abilities but also play a role in shaping strong character, which is the basis for developing positive attitudes and behaviors in everyday life. Deep learning implemented in the curriculum enables students to develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills that are relevant to real-world needs. Meanwhile, character education instilled through various

extracurricular activities and habits at school teaches students the importance of moral and social values, such as discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. Habits such as prayer, memorization, and other daily routines have a direct impact on students' character development and readiness to face academic and social challenges. This study also highlights the important role of teachers, parents, and the community in supporting the comprehensive development of students' character. Overall, this study suggests that education in elementary schools should not only focus on academic achievement, but also on shaping students' character in an integrated manner with a more holistic curriculum. These findings are expected to contribute to the development of an education curriculum based on the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects to create intelligent students with good character.

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