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A Comparative Study of the Education Systems at SDIT Labschool Al Fatah and SDN Margahayu XIX

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and compare the curriculum design and education system implementation in an Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) as a religion-based private institution and a Public Elementary School (SDN) as a public institution. The approach adopted in this research is descriptive qualitative utilizing a comparative study method. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the Principal of SDIT Labschool Al Fatah and the quality assurance coordinator of SDN Margahayu XIX. The findings indicate that both institutions have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum as their operational foundation; however, significant disparities exist in philosophical orientation, learning concepts, and infrastructural readiness. SDIT Labschool Al Fatah employs a holistic curriculum design that integrates Islamic values and science through a student-centered learning approach, supported by comprehensive information technology (IT) facilities. Conversely, SDN Margahayu XIX focuses on the standard government general curriculum that is inclusive, applying a modified conventional (teacher-centered) method, where the primary challenges lie in limited digital infrastructure and teacher resource readiness. Although the curriculum transition process encountered obstacles such as a learning lag during the adaptation phase in both schools, this new regulation has proven effective in mapping and directing students' interests and talents. In general, this study concludes that institutional status directly shapes the characteristics, culture, and learning ecosystem in responding to national education policies.

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Introduction

Along with the development of science and technology, the government always makes various efforts to improve and improve the curriculum or materials of education programs so that they can move quickly in line with the demands of the world of work and people's lives that are always changing, because education is one of the important pillars in community development and the formation of quality individuals (Purwaningsih et al., 2022) . The education system is a series of sub-systems or elements of education that are interrelated in realizing its success (Perwita & Widuri, 2022) . There are objectives, curriculum, materials, methods, educators, students, facilities, tools, approaches and so on. In the realm of education, the comparison between public schools and private schools has become a topic that has received widespread attention (Linda et al., 2025) . Islamic education is represented through school institutions that have various forms and characteristics. At the level of basic education in Indonesia, in addition to conventionally managed schools, an alternative management model

has now been developed, namely the Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) (Islamic, 2024) .

The presence of private school education that has good quality is the main choice when public schools are unable to meet the demands of quality education, this is natural because the development of increasingly competitive education encourages the emergence of excellent schools as a symbol of the quality of modern education. The most prominent thing in the difference between public and private schools is curriculum design and character education. As an effort to produce a generation with integrity and high morals, character education has been established as a central focus in the national education system (Irawansyah, 2022) . In a more specific context, efforts to integrate Islamic values into the character of students are a must in the Islamic education environment to face the dynamics of globalization and modernization (Ghina Fadlilah Sukmara et al., 2024).

The difference in the status of educational institutions has led integrated Islamic schools to develop curriculum designs that emphasize the internalization of Islamic values throughout the learning process, in contrast to public schools that are more oriented towards a formal national curriculum (Rojii et al., 2019).

The curriculum design of SDIT Labschool Al Fatah is built on three main pillars, namely the national curriculum, the monotheism-based curriculum, and the competency development curriculum. The three bases are realized through three learning focuses. **First**, religious education, which is the scientific foundation of students, includes tahsin, tahfiz, tadabur of the Qur'an and sunnah, fiqh, Arabic, faith, morals, and worship manners. **Second**, the development of academic intelligence which is arranged in an integrated thematic manner, including language mastery, mathematical logic, science, social skills, art, culture, and the physical. **Third**, self-development programs that are oriented towards improving academic skills (cognitive, affective, psychomotor), survival skills (*life skills*), and interest and career development (*career skills*) (SDIT Labschool Al Fatah, 2024) .

The strategy of internalizing character in thematic learning at SDIT Labschool Al Fatah Bekasi City is carried out by inserting moral values into learning tools (syllabus and lesson plans). This process structures religious, independent, discipline, and responsibility values into KD, indicators, and attitude assessment rubrics. This integrated approach has a positive impact on the quality of thematic learning that becomes more efficient and targeted. Overall, the character-filled teaching material facilitates the development of students holistically, namely by advancing cognitive competence while perfecting affective and psychomotor aspects.

Meanwhile, in state schools where the national curriculum is made the main curriculum. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed as an educational framework that prioritizes flexibility, with an emphasis on mastery of essential materials and the formation of students' competencies and character. In an effort to support the recovery of learning quality, this curriculum carries three main characteristics: (1) the application of a project-based approach to hone *soft skills* and instill the values of the Pancasila Student Profile; (2) focusing on crucial materials to provide space for deepening basic competencies, especially literacy and numeracy; and (3) providing autonomy for educators to carry out differentiated learning that is adaptive to the capacity of students and local wisdom (Marcelino et al., 2023) .

Table 1. The main differences in the curriculum design of SDIT vs public elementary schools for character education (Rendy Ardiansyah et al., 2024) .

Aspects	SDIT (Islamic-based/integrated)	State Elementary School
Curriculum foundation	National curriculum + special curriculum of institutions (Islam/pesantren) that emphasizes monotheism,	The national curriculum (K13/KM) as the main reference with a general emphasis on basic competencies and Pancasila

	worship, and morals as the core.	Student Profiles
Character focus	Very strong in religious/Islamic character (obedience to worship, morals, manners) as well as general character (discipline, responsibility, social care)	Focus on national character values (Pancasila, nationality, tolerance, discipline, cooperation) that are more universal and not specific to a particular religion.
Design flexibility	It is more flexible to add local religious content, tahfiz programs, and Islamic activities, because it is not too bound by bureaucratic procedures such as public schools	It is more tied to government structures and regulations; the addition of character content is usually through school activities, P5 projects, and extracurriculars, but the room for modification of the curriculum structure is more limited
Forms of character integration	Combining more intensive religious lesson hours, daily worship habits, and Islamic boarding school/Islamic curriculum as *the core* that forms the religious school climate	Character is integrated in all subjects, P5, as well as school discipline; religious content follows national religious education standards without additional intensive as in SDIT.
Output orientation	Students are expected to be not only academically competent, but also have a strong Islamic identity and are used to practicing religious values in daily life.	Students are expected to have literacy-numeracy competencies and character according to the Pancasila Student Profile; religious identity is fostered but not as deep as the integrated Islamic boarding school/Islamic curriculum.

Therefore, we examined the differences in the education system at Al fattah Lab School and SDN Margahayu XIX. Which aims to compare Curriculum Design to Character Internalization

Method

This research was conducted through the interview stage at two observation locations. The first interview was held in the room of the Head of SDIT Labschool Al Fattah with the principal on Monday, May 11, 2026 at 10.45 WIB. The second interview was held in the Principal of SDN Margahayu XIX with the principal on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 12.15 WIB.

The research methods used in this study are descriptive and comparative methods. According to that: "In general, research methods are defined as scientific ways to obtain data with specific purposes and uses". The type of research used in this study is descriptive – comparative and qualitative research. Sugiyono said that descriptive research is research conducted to determine the existence of independent variables, either one or more variables (stand-alone variables) without making comparisons or looking for variable relationships with each other (Sugiono, 2019) . Meanwhile, comparative research according to Sugiyono is a study that compares the state of one or more variables on two or more different samples, or two different times. In addition, qualitative descriptive research aims to present a detailed picture of the setting and process of a social phenomenon, and is commonly used to study social

phenomenology in schools (Yuliani, 2018).

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was carried out through a multi-method approach to obtain a holistic and in-depth understanding of the education system in both research locus, in addition to the qualitative techniques are multimethod, combining interviews, observations, and document analysis to understand the phenomenon of education as a whole from the perspective of the participants. The techniques used include (Sidiq, 2019):

1. In-depth Interview

The interview was conducted in a semi-structured manner so that the questions and answers flowed naturally but still focused on the guiding instruments. This interview was aimed at exploring verbal data related to policies, curriculum design, and educator perceptions in both schools.

a. Informants: Principal, Vice Principal for Curriculum, and Class Teachers from each school.
b. Data Mining Focus:
    1) The concept and philosophical foundation of curriculum preparation (integration of the Independent Curriculum with the foundation curriculum at SDIT, compared to the full implementation of national standards at SDN).
    2) Teachers' strategies in incorporating character values into the lesson plan/Teaching Module and learning process.
    3) Challenges and evaluations of each education system in shaping students' daily behavior.

2. Observasi (*Observation*)

The researcher used a non-participant observation technique, in which the researcher is present on site to directly observe social and educational activities without interfering in those activities. The main goal is to capture *the hidden curriculum* and school culture that actually happens in the field, not just what is written.

a. Observation Focus at SDIT Labschool Al Fatah: The process of habituating worship (such as congregational Dhuha prayers, murajaah, daily manners), integration of Islamic values in general subjects, and interaction of the religion-based school environment.
b. Observation Focus at SDN Margahayu XIX: Implementation of nationalist habituation (flag ceremony, morning literacy), instilling the value of tolerance and inclusivity in the midst of heterogeneous student demographics, and the dynamics of thematic/project learning in the classroom.

3. Documentation *Study*

This technique serves to collect secondary data and physical evidence that supports the findings from interviews and observations. Documentation is essential to see how the vision of education is relegated to an administrative tool. Documents Analyzed include **:**

a. Education Unit Operational Curriculum Document (KOSP) from both schools.
b. Syllabus and Teaching Module/Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) to see the location of the character value inserts.
c. Student discipline book and attitude assessment instruments (affective rubric).
d. Photo documentation of *habituation* and extracurricular activities that support character formation.

In this study, we collected data from the resource persons, then we combined the opinions of the two resource persons to find out the differences between the education systems of the two elementary schools that we researched and to find out the comparison of the educational principles of SDIT Lab School Al Fattah and SD Negeri Margahayu XIX. SDIT Labschool Al Fatah is located on Jl. Masjid Al Mu'awanah No.60, RT.006/RW.012, Aren Jaya Village, East Bekasi District, Bekasi City, West Java (behind Bank BTN Perumnas 3) while SDN Margahayu XIX is located on Jl. H.M. Djoyomartono, Margahayu Village, East Bekasi District, Bekasi City, West Java (Postal Code 17113).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique in research is qualitative, data analysis in qualitative research is a systematic tracking and regulation process obtained from the results of interview transcripts, field notes and situation analysis collected to improve understanding of these materials so that they can be interpreted into their findings to others. The data analysis used is in the form of a data interaction analysis model with resource persons. In this case, the data component was obtained at the time of data collection by interview techniques.

Result and Discussion

Result

Results and Discussion may be presented in subsections. It should clearly address the main topics in accordance with the research problem, research objectives, and the theories applied.

Based on the results of an in-depth interview conducted with the Principal of SDIT Labschool Al Fattah and Quality Assurance from SDN Margahayu XIX, several comparative conclusions can be drawn as follows:

a. Similarities in Curriculum Implementation The two educational institutions, both SDIT Labschool Al Fattah and SDN Margahayu XIX, currently operate using the same educational system foundation, namely the implementation of the Independent Curriculum.
b. Differentiation of Learning Concepts There is a clear distinction (difference or specificity) in the instructional approach. SDIT Labschool Al Fattah carries the concept of religious-based learning combined with active discussion methods. Long before the Independent Curriculum was launched, this school had applied the principle of integration between Islamic values and general science (such as Mathematics and Science) in the *active learning ecosystem*. On the other hand, the learning concept at SDN Margahayu XIX emphasizes the general curriculum according to government standards. The teaching and learning process at SDN prioritizes interactive methods through group discussions, presentations, and experiments in the classroom.
c. The Philosophical Foundations of Education The two schools have different philosophical footholds. SDIT Labschool Al Fattah focuses on holistic education that encapsulates the development of academic, moral, and spiritual dimensions. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in this school is driven by motivation to comply with regulations, stimulate student creativity, and facilitate teachers in mapping and directing students' talents with precision. On the other hand, the orientation of SDN Margahayu XIX is based on the development of students' academic, social, and emotional competencies which absolutely refers to the instructional direction and policies of the government as the patron agency.
d. Teaching and Learning Process Mechanism The management of the teaching and learning process is adjusted to the culture of each institution. At SDIT Labschool Al Fattah, the effective day begins with the habit of reciting the Qur'an for 15 minutes. The learning load is allocated as many as 8 hours of lessons (for classes III-VI) and 6 hours of lessons (for classes I-II) with a duration of 30 minutes per hour and two break times. The main approach is *Student-Centered* through question-and-answer methods, analysis, and practice, which is supported by tahsin, tahfiz, and Dhuha prayer programs. Meanwhile, SDN Margahayu XIX began learning activities by strengthening the character of nationalism, such as singing mandatory/regional songs. The allocation of study time is 8 hours of lessons per day (except for Fridays as many as 6 hours) with a duration of 30 minutes per hour. Teaching at this elementary school tends to combine the lecture method (*Teacher-Centered*) with class interaction.
e. Impact of the Curriculum transition Curriculum changes have double implications. Positively, these new regulations help students in both schools become more targeted in exploring their potential interests and talents. However, on the other hand, there are still negative impacts in the form of the phenomenon of lagging understanding in some students during the learning adaptation process, both in general and religious content.
f. Challenges of Curriculum Implementation The structural challenges faced by the two

educational entities have different characteristics. The main challenges of SDIT Labschool Al Fattah include the psychological and pedagogical adaptation of the entire school ecosystem (students, teachers, and principals) to the new system, as well as the obligation to design formative and summative evaluation instruments. As for SDN Margahayu XIX, the crucial obstacle lies in the readiness of human resources (the need for teachers who are skilled in designing IT-based modules), the limitations of technological infrastructure, and time management to compact the delivery of material efficiently.

g. The availability of media and learning facilities SDIT Labschool Al Fattah has comprehensive infrastructure facilities, characterized by the availability of projectors in each classroom, outdoor sports facilities, and two separate laboratories (computer and science). SDN Margahayu XIX also has quite good supporting facilities, including playgrounds. However, the availability of IT facilities is still very limited, so their use requires a rotating lending mechanism.
h. Characteristics of Methodological Approach Fundamental differences can also be seen in terms of time allocation, systems, and extracurricular priorities. SDIT Labschool Al Fattah applies innovative and interactive methods (based on games and group work) that focus on identifying student needs and strengthening spiritual teachings. Meanwhile, SDN Margahayu XIX adopts a modified conventional method, which is a combination of teacher-based instruction with creative learning activities.
i. Academic Evaluation System Both institutions implement a periodic intellectual ability evaluation system through monthly exams and Final Semester Exams (UAS). The selection of the rhythm of the monthly exam is considered more measurable in monitoring students' cognitive development than the Mid-Semester Exam (UTS) system. Specific advantages are found at SDIT Labschool Al Fattah which complements the intellectual evaluation with the evaluation of talents and interests through the implementation of internal competitions at the end of each semester.

History and Vision of the Formation of the Birth of SDIT Labschool Al Fattah was initiated by the vision of the foundation which wants the formation of a generation of people who are not only intelligent in general science, but also equipped with strong Islamic religious literacy. On the contrary, as a public institution under the relevant ministries, SDN Margahayu XIX was established to accommodate a national education system that is oriented towards basic education services that are general, inclusive, and state-standard.

Institutional status (religious-based private schools versus public public schools) directly shapes the characteristics of the learning ecosystem in both schools. SDIT Labschool excels in the integration of spiritual values and the readiness of active learning support facilities, while SDN Margahayu focuses on fulfilling general education standards in an inclusive manner with the main challenge in the procurement of facilities and digital literacy of educators.

Discussions

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in both SDIT Labschool Al Fatah and SDN Margahayu XIX reflects different educational orientations shaped by institutional identity and philosophical foundations. Although both schools adopt the same national curriculum framework, the learning ecosystem and curriculum design differ significantly according to their institutional characteristics. SDIT Labschool Al Fatah integrates Islamic values into academic learning through holistic and student-centered approaches, while SDN Margahayu XIX emphasizes inclusive public education aligned with national competency standards. This finding supports Rojii et al. (2019), who argued that Integrated Islamic Schools develop curriculum structures emphasizing religious internalization alongside academic achievement. Similarly, Linda et al. (2025) explained that Islamic-based schools tend to construct educational systems integrating moral and spiritual values into all instructional processes. In the broader context of educational reform, Marcelino et al. (2023) also emphasized that the Merdeka Curriculum allows schools

flexibility to adapt learning according to institutional vision and students' developmental needs.

The integration of religious values into daily learning activities at SDIT Labschool Al Fatah demonstrates the implementation of holistic character education through habituation and school culture. Activities such as Qur'an recitation, congregational prayer, tahfiz, and moral habituation indicate that character formation is embedded not only within curriculum documents but also in the lived educational experience of students. This finding is consistent with Ghina Fadlilah Sukmara et al. (2024), who stated that Islamic education institutions prioritize moral development through integrated spiritual practices and daily behavioral reinforcement. Bai (2019) also noted that meaningful learning environments are developed when educational institutions integrate values, technology, and contextual experiences into instructional practices. In line with this, an article published in *Amorti: Jurnal Studi Islam Interdisipliner* highlighted that Islamic educational institutions play a strategic role in strengthening students' moral identity through integrated curriculum and school culture approaches (Amorti Editorial Team, 2025).

The comparative framework of curriculum implementation, pedagogical orientation, character education, and institutional challenges between SDIT Labschool Al Fatah and SDN Margahayu XIX is presented in Figure 1.

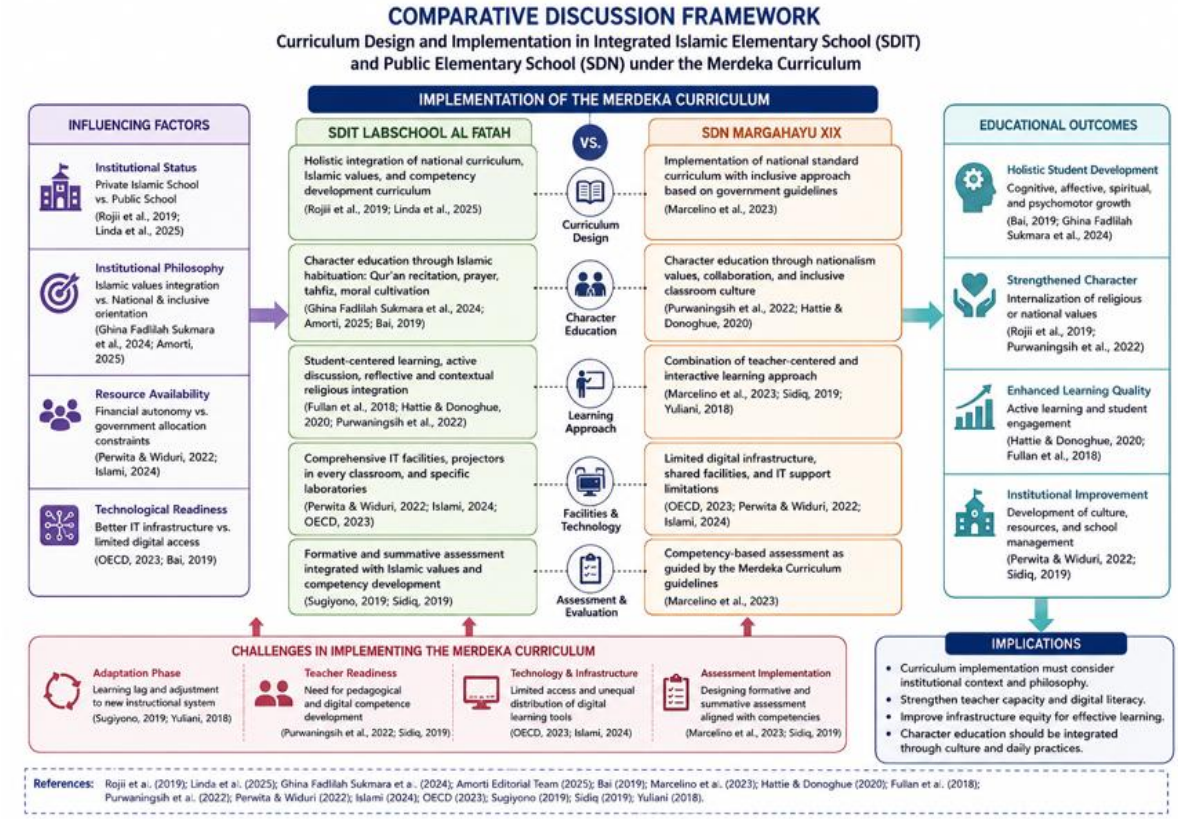


Figure 1 Ghina Fadlilah Sukmara, Opik Taupik Kurahman, & Dadan Rusmana. (2024). The Effectiveness of the Islamic Education Curriculum in Shaping the Character of Students in Integrated Islamic Schools. Morals: Journal of Islamic Education Studies, 2(1), 132–141.

The pedagogical differences identified in this study also demonstrate varying levels of instructional transformation between private Islamic schools and public schools. SDIT Labschool Al Fatah predominantly implements student-centered learning integrated with active discussions and reflective activities, whereas SDN Margahayu XIX still combines teacher-centered instruction with interactive classroom learning. This result aligns with Hattie and Donoghue (2020), who explained that active and reflective learning environments significantly improve students' engagement and deeper understanding. Furthermore, Fullan et al. (2018)

emphasized that modern educational transformation requires learning models that position students as active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Similar findings were also reported by Purwaningsih et al. (2022), who argued that curriculum reform effectiveness depends heavily on teachers' pedagogical readiness and their ability to create adaptive and participatory learning environments.

Another important finding concerns the disparity in technological infrastructure and learning facilities between the two institutions. SDIT Labschool Al Fatah possesses more comprehensive IT-based facilities, including projectors in each classroom and specialized laboratories, while SDN Margahayu XIX still experiences limitations in technological access and digital learning support. This finding strengthens the argument proposed by Perwita and Widuri (2022) that private schools generally demonstrate greater flexibility in developing educational innovations due to better institutional resource management. Islami (2024) also explained that differences in educational quality between public and private schools are often influenced by infrastructure readiness, funding systems, and institutional autonomy. In addition, OECD (2023) emphasized that digital learning facilities and technological readiness significantly affect the success of curriculum implementation and students' learning outcomes in contemporary education systems.

The transition toward the Merdeka Curriculum also generated adaptation challenges for both schools, particularly regarding assessment systems, instructional adjustments, and teacher readiness. Teachers in both institutions experienced difficulties in designing formative and summative assessments aligned with competency-based learning approaches (Suttrisno et al., 2026). This finding is consistent with Sugiyono (2019), who explained that educational change frequently creates transitional challenges requiring institutional adaptation and professional development. Sidiq (2019) further emphasized that successful curriculum implementation requires collaborative support among teachers, school leaders, and educational stakeholders. Meanwhile, Yuliani (2018) noted that qualitative educational transformation is strongly influenced by institutional culture and educators' responsiveness toward policy changes. Therefore, curriculum implementation success depends not only on policy adoption but also on institutional readiness, teacher competence, and contextual educational support systems.

Overall, this study contributes to comparative education discourse by demonstrating that institutional status significantly shapes curriculum orientation, pedagogical approaches, character education models, and educational ecosystem development. The findings imply that character education effectiveness is influenced not merely by formal curriculum structures but also by institutional philosophy, learning culture, habituation processes, and infrastructural support. These results reinforce the importance of contextual and institution-based educational development strategies to support effective implementation of national curriculum reforms in diverse school environments.

Conclusion

This study concludes that although SDIT Labschool Al Fatah and SDN Margahayu XIX implement the same national curriculum framework, namely the Merdeka Curriculum, both institutions demonstrate significant differences in curriculum orientation, pedagogical approaches, character education strategies, and institutional readiness. SDIT Labschool Al Fatah applies a holistic educational approach integrating Islamic values, spiritual habituation, and student-centered learning into the instructional process. In contrast, SDN Margahayu XIX emphasizes inclusive public education through the implementation of national competency standards and Pancasila character values within a more general educational framework.

The findings also reveal that institutional status strongly influences the development of educational culture, learning ecosystems, and infrastructure readiness. SDIT Labschool Al Fatah shows stronger integration between religious character education and active learning support facilities, while SDN Margahayu XIX continues to face challenges related to technological infrastructure, digital literacy, and teacher readiness during curriculum

transition processes. Despite these differences, both schools experienced similar adaptation challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly regarding instructional adjustment and assessment practices.

This study contributes to comparative education discourse by emphasizing that successful curriculum implementation is influenced not only by curriculum policy itself but also by institutional philosophy, school culture, pedagogical readiness, and supporting facilities. Therefore, educational improvement efforts should involve comprehensive strategies including teacher professional development, strengthening technological infrastructure, and contextual curriculum adaptation according to institutional characteristics. Future studies are recommended to involve broader educational contexts and employ mixed-method approaches to obtain deeper understanding regarding the effectiveness of curriculum implementation and character education practices in diverse school environments.

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