

# Developing an Effective Character Education Model to Cultivate Noble Traits in Elementary School Students

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**Abstract.** The increasing involvement of youth in criminal activities is often linked to a lack of character development, highlighting the need for an effective educational approach. This study aims to develop a Character Education Model (CEM) along with a guidebook to enhance noble values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect among elementary school students. National character building is crucial, but youth criminal behavior is also related to insufficient parental attention. Therefore, schools must provide a child-friendly environment that offers a fun and challenging learning atmosphere to foster these core values. The development of this model is based on character education theories and frameworks emphasizing holistic moral development. The implementation of the IC learning plays a significant role by promoting student-centered learning and supporting both academic and social growth. This research employed a Research and Development (R&D) design, including stages of planning, product development, field testing, revision, and final implementation. Data were collected through interviews and questionnaires involving 12 teachers and parents, and analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods. The validity of the CEM was confirmed by feedback from experts and practitioners. The results not only met the research objectives but also provided a theoretical foundation for character education models in elementary schools. This aligns with the goals of the Independent Curriculum to create a more personalized, flexible, and holistic approach to education. This study contributes a practical model for improving student character development in elementary education.

**Keywords:** Character Education Model; Elementary School Students; Teaching Model; Noble Traits; Research & Development.

## 1. Introduction

The implementation of education in schools, including elementary schools, inherently involves the delivery of knowledge, the development of skills, and the cultivation of behavioral attitudes. These are all essential for students in preparing for their future roles in society. Education should not solely focus on academic achievement, but also on shaping individuals who can adapt, interact, and contribute positively to the community (Surmana, 2022). However, in practice, studies have shown that schools often emphasize mastery of subject-specific knowledge and skills, while neglecting the development of behavioral attitudes (Pellegrino, 2012). This is reflected in the educational assessment system, where academic performance is the primary factor in determining whether a student advances to the next grade level. In contrast, while components of affective assessment, such as student behavior and character in interacting with peers, teachers, parents, and the broader community, are important aspects of educational evaluation, they are rarely considered major indicators of educational success. This approach contradicts the fundamental goal of education, which should aim to facilitate behavioral change and character development (Bleses et al., 2018).

In Indonesia, the emphasis on character education (CE) has gained increasing significance, especially in the face of evolving societal challenges and the need for a generation equipped with both intellectual and moral virtues. Research in the West, such as Piaget's constructivist psychological theory (1965 in Fajrussalam et al., 2020) and Kohlberg's (1976) stages of moral development, has shaped our understanding of character as a psychosocial construct tied to

the surrounding context. In Indonesia, CE plays a crucial role in supporting the realization of the nation's Vision 2045, which aims to develop human resources that are not only highly skilled but also morally grounded and socially responsible. The integration of CE is essential to produce a generation that is capable of critical thinking, empathy, and collaboration in a diverse society (Koesoma, 2007; Rokhman et al., 2014).

One of the key developments in this regard is the Independent Learning Curriculum, which aligns with these educational goals. The curriculum emphasizes a flexible, student-centered approach that prioritizes the holistic development of students, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Haq & Wakidi, 2024). It supports personalized learning, allowing students to progress at their own pace, fostering both academic competence and moral values. Unlike the previous curriculum system, which primarily focused on academic achievement, Independent Curriculum (IC) incorporates character formation and social skills as integral components of the learning process. This flexible and holistic approach offers a promising opportunity for integrating ethical and moral education into students' everyday lives (Sujiono, 2017).

However, despite the potential of IC, challenges remain in effectively integrating CE within the learning process. These challenges include balancing academic and character development, as well as ensuring that the curriculum is fully implemented in diverse school settings. Therefore, this research seeks to explore how CE can be better integrated into the curriculum, specifically through the CE model (CEM), which focuses on the cultivation of noble values in elementary school students.

### **1.1. Problem Statement**

While the CE Strengthening (CES) program and IC emphasize holistic student development, the integration of CE remains underdeveloped in many schools, with a continued focus on academic achievement over moral and social growth. This gap, if left unaddressed, may lead to an imbalance in students' development, neglecting essential life skills and moral values needed for future challenges. This research explores how a CE model, aligned with IC, can enhance students' moral and social behaviors, thereby better preparing them for the challenges of the future.

### **1.2. Related Research**

Related studies have explored various approaches to CE across different countries, contributing significantly to the field. Piaget (1965) examined the stages of moral development, emphasizing the cognitive aspects of ethical reasoning in children, while Kohlberg (1971) developed a framework of moral development stages, focusing on justice and ethical decision-making. In contrast, Althof and Berkowitz (2006) expanded on the notion of CE, highlighting the importance of virtue ethics and social-emotional learning in the development of moral behavior. In the Indonesian context, Koesoma (2007) and Rokhman et al. (2014) underscore the role of local wisdom in CE, suggesting that indigenous values should be integrated into national educational frameworks. However, while these studies have laid important groundwork, there remains a gap in the practical application of CE models tailored to elementary school settings within the context of IC. This research seeks to address this gap by proposing an adaptable, student-centered model that is not only based on global theories but also incorporates local values, aiming for a more holistic and contextually relevant approach to character development in Indonesia.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

Research Objectives of this study are: (1) To develop a CE model tailored to the IC framework that enhances students' noble behavior. (2) To explore the feasibility of the CE model in various school contexts and its alignment with IC's goals of holistic education. (3) To provide practical CE Model Effectiveness and Practicality, with a focus on students' social and emotional growth.

This study aims to contribute to the development of CE in Indonesia by providing a comprehensive model that integrates both moral education and academic learning within

the flexible framework of IC. By doing so, it supports the vision of creating a future generation that is not only academically competent but also morally responsible and socially engaged.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. Theoretical and Contextual Foundations**

This study is grounded in several educational and psychological theories related to character development, moral education, and student-centered learning, which are key to understanding the integration of CE within the Independent Curriculum (IC) framework.

One of the core theories underpinning this research is constructivist theory, particularly as developed by Piaget (1965), which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through interaction with the environment. According to Piaget, the development of moral and ethical reasoning occurs as children engage with others and their environment (Malik & Marwaha, 2023). This view aligns with IC, which advocates for personalized and experiential learning. In this approach, students actively engage with learning materials and their surroundings, thus fostering not only academic skills but also social and emotional growth (Fajrussalam et al., 2020).

In addition to Piaget (1971)'s theory and Kohlberg (1976)'s stages of moral development offer a key framework for understanding how individuals develop moral reasoning through various stages. Kohlberg posits that moral development progresses through stages, and education should encourage students to move toward higher stages of moral reasoning. This model is integral to CE as it provides insight into how students' moral and ethical thinking can be nurtured in a structured, progressive manner (Fauzi, 2014). In line with IC, which emphasizes developmental and personalized learning, this framework supports the idea that CE should be a process that evolves with students' cognitive and emotional maturity.

Another critical perspective is social cognitive theory by Bandura (1986), which stresses the role of observation and imitation in learning. In this context, students learn appropriate behaviors by observing the actions of significant others such as parents, teachers, and peers. This theory is particularly relevant in the development of CE, as educators and school members must model the expected behaviors and attitudes. The integration of CE within the classroom and daily life aligns with Bandura's assertion that behavior is learned through social interactions and reinforcement.

Moreover, local wisdom and cultural context are integral to this framework, particularly in the Indonesian context, where CE must be aligned with national and local values. As Koesoma (2007) and Rokhman et al. (2014) argue, CE in Indonesia should incorporate local cultural norms and values. These perspectives emphasize the importance of adapting CE models to reflect Indonesian traditions, ethics, and social expectations. In the context of IC, this ensures that students develop a sense of responsibility and empathy that is both globally relevant and culturally grounded.

Lastly, theories of holistic education, such as those proposed by Miller and Sellar (2007), which focus on the integration of cognitive, emotional, and moral development, underpin the approach taken in IC. These theories argue that effective education must address all aspects of the learner, not just academic achievement, but also emotional and social intelligence. The holistic approach supports the notion that CE cannot be taught in isolation; rather, it should be embedded throughout all educational practices, as is advocated by IC (Sujiono, 2017).

### **2.2. Application to the Study**

The theoretical frameworks mentioned above provide a comprehensive basis for the development of the CE model within the context of IC. By combining these theories, the study integrates moral development, social learning, and cultural relevance into a model of CE that is personalized, contextually appropriate, and aligned with the curriculum's goals of fostering well-rounded individuals who are academically capable, socially responsible, and morally

upright. This model encourages a balanced development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills, which is central to both CE and the educational philosophy of IC.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The design in this study employed a Research and Development (R & D) approach. This research approach is used to develop targeted products and evaluate their efficacy (Sugiyono, 2011). This study designed a model of CE using the R & D model from Borg and Gall. The resulting product was a new CE model for shaping the noble character of elementary school students. The educational model developed was an intra-curricular model. In the CE development, character values were not only taught to achieve cognitive understanding but were also developed and accustomed to both learning and activities outside of teaching.

#### **3.2. Development Model**

This study's design used a R & D approach. It is a research technique used to create specific items and evaluate their efficacy (Sugiyono, 2011). The educational research and development process follows a business-based development model. Here, new procedures and products are created using research findings. These are then tested, evaluated, and improved until they reach certain standards for effectiveness, quality, or conformance. Researchers in this study used Borg and Gall's R&D paradigm for CE. The end result was an innovative approach to CE that aims to instill admirable traits in primary school pupils.

#### **3.3. Development Procedure**

This development research procedure was designed in ten stages of development developed by Borg & Gall (Herayanti et al., 2017). The stages of this development model include: (1) Preliminary study and information collection: conducting expert interviews, feedback, and developing strategies and plans. (2) Planning: conducting a literature review, gathering information, and analyzing field conditions. (3) Initial product development: product prototype development based on the preliminary research results and interviews. (4) Initial field testing: soliciting general and specific expert feedback. (5) Product revision: analyzing the initial field test results and making revisions based on these results. (6) Main field testing: soliciting input from practitioners through research field trials. (7) Operational product revision: analyzing the main field test results and making revisions based on these results. (8) Operational field testing: soliciting feedback from practitioners through operational field trials by re-testing the product on practitioners with twice the number of main field testing. (9) Final product revision: analyzing the operational field test results and making revisions based on these results. (10) Dissemination and implementation: disseminating and implementing the product (making reports).

The procedure carried out in this study referred to the development research steps presented by Borg & Gall (Herayanti et al., 2017).

#### **3.4. Product Testing**

The testing was conducted to obtain data that would be used in making a complete product revision. The stages and steps of product testing are as follows. (a) Preparation of CEM designs and models to improve noble behavior of elementary school students. (b) Product validation through focus group discussions: (1) Preparation of the initial draft of the CE model to improve the noble behavior of elementary school students. (2) Validation of the CE model to enhance the noble behavior of elementary school students. (3) Revising the CE model to improve the noble behavior of elementary school students. (4) Limited testing. (5) Limited testing data analysis. (6) Implementation of the CE model to improve the noble behavior of elementary school students

#### **3.5. Data Analysis Techniques**

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used by researchers to perform a normalcy test. The Wilcoxon non-parametric statistical test was used to examine student knowledge outcomes in

the pre-test and post-test, identifying significant changes. Checking the assumptions of the null and one hypotheses, verifying the symmetry of the difference in the visual representation of the SPSS data, computing and sorting the difference, computing test statistics, and validating P values with a standard value of 0.5 are all included in the validation process (Gibbons, 2011).

### **3.6. Data Sources and Types**

This study obtained two types of data: quantitative and qualitative (Ritchie, 2013). The two data provided an overview of the effectiveness and practicality of the CE model and explained the implemented CEM processes and the outputs achieved from the CEM processes implemented. Meanwhile, the data obtained in this study are described in the explanation below: a) The CE model data generally included data on: (1) model development, (2) the feasibility or validity of the model, and (3) the effectiveness of the education model in improving the noble behavior of elementary school students. b) CEM implementation data comprised data on (1) teacher exemplary behavior in the CEM process in the classroom, (2) student responses to CEM, (3) teacher personality, (4) CEM facilities in the classroom and outside the classroom, (5) learning media used in CEM, and (6) the role of parents in instilling CEM habituation at home.

### **3.7. Data Collection**

In this study, data were collected by using questionnaires and interviews. Meanwhile, the instruments employed were questionnaire sheets and interview guidelines. All the above instruments were utilized to assess the CE model's validity, effectiveness, and practicality (Abawi, 2013).

Researchers in this research surveyed elementary school teachers and parents to get their thoughts on the product's validity and the factors that go into implementing CE programs.

### **3.8. Data Analysis**

Preliminary research data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods. This study's qualitative data analysis was conducted by providing a logical narrative according to the research objectives (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative data were also obtained from the description of the effectiveness and practicality of the CE model through interviews. The CE model is said to be effective and practical if the respondent's answers show positive answers.

In terms of data collection, research instruments such as structured interviews and questionnaires were used to gather information from the participants. These instruments were designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data on the implementation, effectiveness, and practicality of the CE model. The validity and reliability of the data were ensured through expert validation of the instruments, pilot testing, and adjusting the instruments based on feedback to ensure consistency and clarity. Additionally, inter-rater reliability was checked to confirm the consistency of qualitative data analysis. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), data analysis is a crucial research stage that directly impacts the achievement of research objectives. Quantitative data were analyzed to evaluate the implementation, effectiveness, practicality, and validity of the CE model in elementary schools.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. The Development Results of Character Education Model in Elementary Schools**

Using Borg and Gall's R&D paradigm, this research sought to develop a CE model for CE. The resulting product was a new CE model to improve the noble behavior of elementary school students. According to David (2015), moral or character educators must function as "knowledge intermediaries," effectively repackaging information to achieve this goal. Therefore, the researchers developed an educational model in the form of an intra-curricular model for CEM subjects. It is where the character values are not taught to achieve cognitive understanding only as is currently going on but are also developed and accustomed to, both in learning and activities outside.

In addition, the material in the CE model was developed as a special material. In implementing the CE model, it is hoped that it will be integrated into every activity at school, both in learning and after learning. It indicates that the implementation of this model applies the Contract-Based Government Employees (CGE) strategy (Learning, Habituation, and Giving Exemplary) with the "Si Cakep" and "Si Molek" approaches. In this case, activities at each lesson and after learning are used as materials or media to develop character values so that teachers do not need to change learning materials but use them to build character values. In addition, gathering data or information is surely what the CE model evaluation is all about when it comes to improving the noble conduct of primary school pupils. The goal is to find out what the model's strengths, shortcomings, advantages, and values are. The goal is to make the development model better and more appealing.

The procedure conducted in this study referred to the steps of development research presented (Gall & Borg, 2006). Meanwhile, the development results of the CE model allude to the steps of this research procedure in detail as follows. a) Preliminary study and information collection. Preliminary studies were carried out by digging up information and reviewing relevant journals. b) Planning. The planning stage was conducted by conducting various main activities, including designing instrument models, compiling guidelines, and compiling textbooks. In this activity, the teachers at the school, principals, and parents were involved. The design of a model began with a discussion to find out how far the CE model has existed in schools, then prepared the CE model instrument and prepared a guide to the use of the instrument. c) Initial product development. The initial product development stage was performed by discussing the relationship with the previous product, namely that the character learning material was still integrated into subjects under religious education and CE. This time, those involved in the discussion were religious teachers, classroom teachers, and school principals regarding separating CE materials from religious education materials. During this phase, we aimed to create the first draft of our elementary school CE model, which would serve as both the teacher's and the students' guide.

#### **4.2. Qualitative Data Findings**

In the qualitative phase of this research, data were primarily gathered through interviews with teachers, school principals, and parents to explore their perceptions of the CE model. These interviews provided insight into the effectiveness, practicality, and challenges of implementing the CE model. Participants shared their experiences with integrating CE into the school environment, both during lessons and in extracurricular activities. The findings indicated that while the CE model was well-received by teachers and principals, there were some challenges related to the consistency of its application outside the classroom. Several teachers emphasized the need for more training to effectively apply the CGE strategy (Learning, Habituation, and Giving Exemplary) and the "Si Cakep" and "Si Molek" approaches. Additionally, parents highlighted the importance of reinforcing the character values at home. Overall, qualitative data underscored the positive reception of the CE model but also pointed out areas that required further development, particularly in terms of training and support for educators and parents.



The content validation data from expert judgment already contained the validation results from three validators, and the results of expert judgment media from educational practitioners are presented. The following is the data from the expert judgment media validation results from education practitioners.

### 4.3. Quantitative Data Findings

In the quantitative phase, a survey was conducted to assess the impact of the CE model on students' noble behavior. The survey included Likert-scale questions that measured changes in student attitudes, behaviors, and character traits after the implementation of the CE model. The survey was distributed to a sample of teachers, students, and parents, providing a comprehensive overview of the model's effectiveness. The results revealed significant improvements in students' behaviors, particularly in areas such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and respect. The data indicated a notable increase in the positive behaviors exhibited by students both in the classroom and during extracurricular activities. Statistical analysis, such as the Wilcoxon test, was performed to identify the significance of these changes. The findings showed that the CE model had a statistically significant impact on improving students' character, validating its effectiveness as a tool for CE in elementary schools.

**Table 2.** Assessment of the Material Content Validation in the CEM Teacher's Book

No.	Component	Score			Total
		Validator 1	Validator 2	Validator 3	
1	Concept accuracy	4	4	4	12
2	The truth of principles/laws	4	4	4	12
3	Theory accuracy	4	4	4	12
4	Procedure/method accuracy	4	4	4	12
C		Update			
1	Conformity with the development of science	4	4	4	12
2	Encouraging to seek further information	4	4	4	12
	Mean of content component	4	4	4	12
II.		Language			
		Conformity for Student Development			
1	Conformity to the level of students	4	4	4	12

No.	Component	Score			Total
		Validator 1	Validator 2	Validator 3	
2	Conformity to the level of social-emotional development of students	4	4	4	12
A.		Communicative			
1	Student understanding of the message	4	4	4	12
2	The suitability of the illustration with the substance of the message	4	4	4	12
B		Dialogic and Interactive			
1	Ability to motivate students to respond to messages	4	4	4	12
2	Encouraging critical thinking in students	4	4	4	12
C		Straightforward			
1	Sentence Structure Accuracy	4	4	4	12
2	Term Standard	4	4	4	12
D.		Coherence and Sequence of Thoughts			
1	Linkages between chapters/subchapters or paragraph	4	4	4	12
2	Integrity of meaning in chapters/subchapters/ paragraphs	4	4	4	12
E.		Conformity with the Correct Indonesian Rules			
1	Grammatical accuracy	4	4	4	12
2	Spelling accuracy	4	4	4	12
F.		Use of Terms and Symbols			

No.	Component	Score			Total
		Validator 1	Validator 2	Validator 3	
1	Consistency of using terms	4	4	4	12
2	Consistency of using symbols	4	4	4	12
	Mean of language	4	4	4	12
<b>III</b>	<b>Components of Presentation</b>				
<b>A</b>	<b>Presentation Technique</b>				
1	Systematic consistency of studies in chapter	4	4	4	12
2	Presentation logic	4	4	4	12
3	Concept sequence	4	4	4	12
4	Coherence	4	4	4	12
<b>B</b>	<b>Material Support</b>				
1	Suitability and accuracy	4	4	4	12
2	Illustration with advance organizer material (Learning motivation generator)	4	4	4	12
3	Current references for texts, tables, figures, and appendices	4	4	4	12
<b>B.</b>	<b>Learning Presentation</b>				
1	Student involvement	4	4	4	12
2	Student-centered	4	4	4	12
3	Creating interactive communication	4	4	4	12
4	Suitability with the characteristics of the subject	4	4	4	12

No.	Component	Score			Total
		Validator 1	Validator 2	Validator 3	
5.	Ability to generate feedback for self-evaluation	4	4	4	12
Mean of Presentation Components		4	4	4	4

Based on the assessment of the material content validation in the CEM teacher's book in Table 2, it can be concluded that validators 1, 2, and 3 gave the same value as the good category. It denotes that the material content was good, so the book could be used with little revision.

#### 4.4. Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Data

The qualitative and quantitative methods were conducted separately but complemented each other in providing a comprehensive evaluation of the CE model. The qualitative phase provided rich, detailed insights into the implementation process and the challenges faced by educators and parents, while the quantitative phase provided measurable evidence of the model's impact on students' character development. By combining both methods, this research was able to offer a holistic understanding of the CE model's effectiveness and identify key areas for improvement.



**Table 3.** Conclusion Category for Development Products

	Mean	Conclusion
5-6	1 (not good)	Cannot be used and must be
7-8	2 (less good)	Cannot be used yet and still need consultation
9-10	3 (good enough)	Can be used with multiple revisions
11-12	4 (good)	Can be used with minor revisions
13-15	5 (very good)	Can be used without revision

From the data presented in Table 3 related to the assessment by education experts, it can be concluded that the media accuracy in developing character attitudes in elementary school students were categorized well. Nevertheless, some components or elements of the media needed to be revised according to the suggestions of the three validators to be corrected according to input so that this CEM book's contents are even better and can be used in the teaching and learning process of CE in elementary schools.

**Table 4.** Differences in Product Development Before and After Revision



Before Revision	After Revision
<p>The book cover was not attractive, did not match the content of the material developed, and only consisted of the front cover.</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <p>The book cover is in accordance with the material content developed, already has a back cover, and some sentences invite readers to implement CEM, both at school and outside of school, with interesting sentences.</p>

**B. Perhatikan pada gambar ini!**



Siapa yang membuat benda-benda ini?

**Yuk, kita menyanyi!**

*Bintang kecil di langit yang biru  
 Amat banyak menghias angkasa  
 Aku ingin terbang dan menari  
 Jauh tinggi ke tempat kau berada*

Before being revised, there should be a material picture related to the song to be sung and the imperative sentence needed to be corrected.

**B. Perhatikan gambar berikut!**



Siapa yang membuat benda-benda ini?

**Yuk, kita menyanyikan lagu Bintang Kecil!**

*Bintang kecil di langit yang biru  
 Amat banyak menghias angkasa  
 Aku ingin terbang dan menari  
 Jauh tinggi ke tempat kau berada*

The book already contains pictures of the song to be sung, and the command line has been corrected.

The main field test was carried out directly to two schools with an evaluation of the revised product involving practitioners in the field. The main field test in this study was the CE model application in elementary schools with the experimental method at one school.

**5. Discussion**

**5.1. CE model Development**

The steps for developing the CE model began with a preliminary study, where this study found that learning was still centered on the material and the teacher, and the learning objectives had not been maximally achieved. At the planning stage, the preparation and compilation of guidelines for using the CE model instrument were conducted in elementary schools. The initial model development stage consisted of two activities. The first was the media selection process adjusted to the results of the interviews. Meanwhile, the media used was a character learning model with a series of teacher manuals and a character model book for students. The second was the activity of selecting the format so that students were interested and motivated. Thus, the student book model was made interesting.

Furthermore, the initial field test phase in the CE model development showed that the student book model with the "Si Cakep" and "Si Molek" approach, the teacher's book model, research instruments, and teaching materials of "the CE model in elementary schools (teacher's guide or book 1)" could be used with minor revisions. The instrument was prepared for the primary field test stage during the product revision. The main field test phase then showed data about choice and self-control, attention to students' interests and feelings, students as whole people, and the teacher acting as a facilitator. Then, the operational product revision stage was performed, showing fit models supported by six aspects of attitude: honesty, discipline, responsibility, courtesy, tolerance, and valid and reliable mutual cooperation.

After that, the operational field test phase revealed the instruments that had been improved and refined by the researchers together with the research supervisor. A book that serves as both a teacher's handbook and a student book was created as a result of this study. Its purpose is to introduce elementary school pupils to heroic personalities. The findings of the literature review supported the idea that pupils absorb the attitudes and personalities of their teachers and peers between the ages of seven and twelve, which formed the basis of the chosen age. Based on the research findings, students 7-12 years old were identified as developing character schemes, such as honesty, responsibility, hard work, tenacity, perseverance, and ethical manners, as the basis for behavior to be attached to children in the family, school, and community environment.

Character formation in children is a continuous process, beginning at an early age, as emphasized by Soaraka, who notes that character development starts at the age of 3-4 years (Soaraka, 1997). To strengthen this early CE, various media are needed to reinforce the introduction of noble characters. Additionally, students must be introduced to proper manners, enabling them to learn how to interact appropriately with adults in their lives, including teachers, parents, and classmates. Character development starts in elementary school and continues throughout a child's life, as they gradually build habits, behaviors, and personalities (Sanrock, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to instill accurate and closely related knowledge about various aspects of character in ways that students can retain for an extended period (Afriyeni, 2018).

In the context of IC, which emphasizes personalized and holistic learning, the curriculum provides a platform for fostering character development alongside cognitive skills. The curriculum supports a flexible and student-centered approach to education, encouraging not only academic achievement but also the nurturing of emotional and social intelligence. In this framework, CE is not confined to traditional approaches but integrated into various aspects of the learning experience. It enables students to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, which are fundamental for building good character. This approach aligns with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's ideas on education, where the character is an essential aspect of national development. Dewantara's concept of CE, rooted in local wisdom and Eastern cultural values, remains relevant today as it focuses on fostering moral values and character-based development in children (Isnaini, 2020).

In this study, the researchers developed a CE model based on local wisdom principles. By incorporating IC, this model encourages students to understand and apply CE in their daily lives within the family, school, and community settings. The character learning model, complemented by accompanying books, not only enhances children's understanding of character but also raises awareness of how to implement these values in their daily interactions. In addition, the model helps students express their personality through creative and thematic activities, allowing them to explore and understand their own characters in a more expressive way.

For example, the research shows that the CE model, supported by the books, can help students express their personalities, where children can modify their character traits for specific themes. Additionally, the inclusion of dress-up games further aids in helping children understand gender identity. According to Ludica et al. (2007), dress-up games are

instrumental in recognizing and identifying gender. This playful approach, integrated into the IC, offers students opportunities to experiment with various roles and behaviors, promoting their social intelligence and personal growth. As Ryan (2011) highlights, the character learning model enables children to adapt to diverse social situations, increasing their ability to navigate different contexts, thereby enhancing their social intelligence.

In conclusion, IC supports the development of CE as a dynamic and integral part of the learning process. Through its student-centered approach, the curriculum encourages students to explore and express their personal character in a supportive and engaging environment. This holistic model not only fosters intellectual growth but also prepares students to become well-rounded individuals capable of making positive contributions to society.

In this study, the character introduction content of honesty, responsibility, tenacity, and others discussed was limited to the sensitivity of children as someone who interacts with the social environment, including the dimensions of knowledge, understanding, and acceptance as part of society (Wibowo, 2012). The material content related to the character was then constructed into an indicator used as a reference to collect data related to the identity of elementary school students. The indicators are arranged as follows. Dimensions of knowledge included (1) students have awareness in carrying out the tasks given by the teacher; (2) students show honesty in speaking and behaving; (3) children can identify things that need to be done in interacting with peers and teachers; (4) children can show an attitude of tenacity; (5) children can show empathy for others; (6) children can respect other people; (7) children have a fairly good fighting power in carrying out problem-solving tasks.

As stated, the book media development in character development used in this study resulted in the main product in the form of book media, which focused on character introduction with the dimensions of knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of children about social ethics. During the research process, it was observed that children began to be stimulated by knowledge related to the character by displaying behaviors that they could have a good awareness of, such as empathy for friends, by wanting to help what they could.

## **5.2. CE Model Feasibility**

The data generated from the model development included a feasibility test of the CEM. This test assessed the content feasibility of the CE model based on an analysis of the material scope, the accuracy of the material, and its up-to-dateness. The CE model in this study was declared feasible and of good quality after improving the material coverage, particularly in terms of depth. This finding aligns with what Gall and Borg (2006) determined: the feasibility of a CE model involves evaluating various components, including content feasibility, language use, educational presentation, and teaching materials. As such, this product was deemed suitable for use in elementary schools.

In the context of IC, the flexibility and adaptability of the curriculum provide an important opportunity for integrating CE models that are relevant and effective for contemporary education needs. The IC emphasizes a personalized, student-centered learning approach that fosters not only cognitive skills but also the development of character through various learning experiences. Therefore, ensuring that CE models, such as the CE model, are feasible and aligned with current educational standards is crucial in meeting the holistic goals of the curriculum.

This aligns with the opinions of Winanti et al. (2019) and Abawi (2013), who assert that product testing is necessary to assess the feasibility of educational products before their implementation. In this study, the product testing phase was essential to determine whether the CE model, enriched by IC's focus on adaptability and relevance, could be effectively implemented in elementary schools. By combining the adaptability of IC with robust model testing, the feasibility of this CE model was verified, ensuring that it could provide valuable support in the development of students' character and social skills.

### 5.3. CE Model Effectiveness and Practicality

The data were about the effectiveness and practicality of the CE model. At the final revision stage, there was no need to revise the model significantly, both teacher's and student's books. Furthermore, the dissemination and implementation stages were carried out to determine the effectiveness and practicality. As a result, the CEM learning model developed in elementary schools was effectively implemented. Meanwhile, from the practical aspect, the CE model developed and applied in elementary schools could be stated to be practically based on arguments from experts and practitioners.

Based on the field test results, it can be described that the products developed effectively contributed to increasing noble values among students. Additionally, the use of books was designed through group learning activities and micro-roles, which aimed to create a joyful atmosphere and spark children's interest. This approach aligns with what McCaslin (2009) stated: role-playing is a form of free play where children explore, imitate, and act according to the character they desire, which can evoke feelings of enjoyment. In the context of IC, this method supports the curriculum's emphasis on flexible, student-centered learning. The curriculum encourages active participation, allowing students to engage in learning experiences that are both meaningful and enjoyable, promoting a deeper understanding of character development.

Furthermore, the research and production process for this character book was not without its challenges. The creation of a high-quality CE book was facilitated and hindered by various factors. One of the contributing factors was the involvement of professional layout designers who assisted academics with media design, which enriched the development of the character book. Experts in fields such as design, media, education, and, of course, teachers, served as users and contributors, each offering valuable knowledge and insights that helped refine the final product. This collaboration embodies the IC's core principle of involving multiple stakeholders in the educational process, ensuring that the materials developed are relevant, engaging, and effective for students.

However, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which posed significant challenges in accessing schools, gathering students, and obtaining parental consent for children to participate. Despite these obstacles, the process highlighted the adaptability and resilience required in implementing educational initiatives under challenging circumstances, which is a key value promoted by IC. The curriculum's flexibility allowed for adjustments and innovative solutions, ensuring that CE continued to be a priority even during such difficult times.

## 6. Conclusion

The educational model developed in this study is an intra-curricular model that integrates character education (CE) model into the broader learning experience. Unlike a specific subject or integrated curriculum, the CE model aims to weave character values into every aspect of school activities, both during and after lessons. This approach aligns with the principles of IC, which emphasizes the integration of knowledge, skills, and character development into personalized, flexible learning experiences. IC encourages educators to foster students' character through varied and meaningful learning activities, thus making CE a fundamental part of the daily school environment. The CE model utilized the Research and Development (R&D) approach proposed by Borg and Gall, which consists of ten steps, including planning, research and data collection, product development, field testing, revisions, and final implementation. This systematic process allowed for continuous refinement, ensuring that the CE model was both effective and adaptable to the needs of elementary school students. The feasibility of the CE model in improving the noble behavior of elementary school students was assessed through various components, including content, language, presentation, and materials. The content feasibility, which included the breadth and depth of the material, was considered excellent and required minimal revisions. Additionally, the percentage of agreement among experts and practitioners regarding the model's feasibility

was high, indicating strong support for its effectiveness. The CE model received an achievement score of 11-12, which placed it in the "good" category, reinforcing its suitability for use in elementary schools.

In the context of IC, which advocates for an integrated and student-centered approach to learning, the application of the CE model proved to be highly effective, practical, and usable. The model demonstrated significant success in enhancing the cultivation of noble values among students, as evidenced by the marked improvements in students' character after the model was implemented. Furthermore, the practical application of this model was affirmed by experts and practitioners, who confirmed that it could be effectively applied in elementary schools, supporting the goals of IC to create an engaging, flexible, and holistic educational environment. In conclusion, the CE model developed in this study can be considered both feasible and effective in fostering the noble behavior of elementary school students. By integrating CE into various school activities, in line with the IC framework, the model offers a valuable tool for nurturing the next generation of responsible, empathetic, and well-rounded individuals.

### **Limitation**

Despite the promising results of this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the scope of the study was confined to elementary schools, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational levels. Additionally, while the study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the CE model in improving noble behavior, its application in diverse socio-cultural contexts across Indonesia could yield varying results. The study was also conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which posed significant challenges in accessing schools, obtaining parental consent, and ensuring consistent data collection. This may have affected the consistency of the field tests and the engagement of participants. Future research could expand the scope to include different educational settings and explore the long-term effects of CE models in promoting student behavior over several years.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made. First, it is crucial for policymakers to consider integrating CE more comprehensively into the national curriculum, ensuring that it is not limited to isolated subjects but embedded throughout the learning process. The flexibility of the IC should be leveraged to allow for greater customization and contextualization of CE, tailored to local needs and values. Furthermore, it is recommended that schools and educators receive ongoing professional development on implementing CE effectively, ensuring they have the necessary tools and strategies to foster both cognitive and moral development in students. Additionally, future studies could investigate the impact of digital platforms in supporting CE, as technology increasingly plays a role in education. Lastly, community and parental involvement should be enhanced, as they are key partners in reinforcing character values outside the school environment.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. All findings and conclusions are based on objective data collected during the study, and the authors have no financial or personal interests that could have influenced the outcomes of this research.

## Declaration of Generative AI-assisted Technologies

This manuscript was prepared with the assistance of ChatGPT. The AI was used to assist in giving ide of theoretical framework All intellectual contributions, critical analyses, and final revisions were conducted by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the content presented in this work.

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