

Elementary School Character Education Challenges: The Evaluation of an Independent Curriculum in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Effective character education delivery in Indonesia's elementary education is faced with challenges and needs. This study explores character education delivery through the lens of the independent curriculum in Bali's elementary schools. The study seeks to understand complexities involved in character development at elementary school level and identify strategies for enhancing this education process. The study used the structured survey approach collecting data through questionnaires distributed to students and interviews conducted with teachers. Strategic sampling was conducted on elementary schools in Bali sampling 2 schools from each regency within every district across Bali Province selecting students in Grades IV-VI from each school, and the respective teachers from each of the selected schools. Findings revealed a multitude of challenges stemming from both intrinsic student factors and external influences, including the pervasive impact of technology and the need for supportive environments. The benefits of this study lie in its provision of a holistic perspective on character education at elementary school level, offering a roadmap for educators, parents, and policymakers to bolster character development in elementary school settings. Practical implications encompass the necessity of integrated character education curricula, continuous teacher development, active involvement of parents and communities, responsible technology integration, research-driven assessments, and a culture of empathy and inclusion. Implementing these strategies will enable schools to navigate the evolving landscape of character education, ultimately fostering students who are not only academically proficient but also equipped with the vital life skills and values needed for responsible and compassionate citizenship.

Keywords: Character education; Elementary education; Curriculum; Life skills Strategies

INTRODUCTION

In general, education has a vital role to play, in the world development. Its importance is known by all groupings and category of people, among such groups, include: professions, educationists, politicians, civilians and governments the world over. For any national growth, education is known to be of vital importance, playing the role of national shaping in all spheres of growth. It is upon this that the Indonesian education vision aims to achieve an advanced, sovereign, independent, and dignified nation through Pancasila, the state ideology and national philosophy (Puspitasari et al., 2021; Bandur, 2012). This ideology seeks to instil critical thinking, creativity, faith in the One Almighty God, noble morals, unity, and global diversity in students (Sarkadi et al., 2022; Nurizka et al., 2020).

The increasing prevalence of immoral tendencies among students has raised concerns among practitioners, prompting a critical examination of character education delivery in Indonesia. While the values of character education are widely acknowledged, there is growing consensus that the effectiveness of its implementation falls short of expectations (Muswara & Zalnur, 2019; Hulawa, 2018; Qoyyimah, 2016). This issue is not rooted in the inherent worth or relevance of the character values being offered but rather in the process of conveying and transferring these character traits.

Achieving the goals and vision of national education is carried out through the implementation of education guided by a set of continuously evolving curricula in line with the progress of the times. The provision of education in Indonesia is considered necessary to be readjusted to meet future competency needs and to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Independent Curriculum, previously referred to as the prototype curriculum, is implemented in schools as part of the efforts to recover and improve the learning process (Munte, 2022). The Independent Curriculum is developed as a more flexible curriculum framework, focusing on essential content, as well as the development of

students' character and competencies. In general, the Independent Curriculum has several unique features that differentiate it from the 2013 curriculum, including strengthening the character profile of Pancasila students through co-curricular activities (Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project), focusing on essential content, granting freedom to teachers, and utilizing the Merdeka Mengajar digital platform application (Hidayat, & Muharizal, 2023). The formation or strengthening of Indonesian students' character receives intensive attention in this context.

Conceptually, character education delivery involves a multifaceted approach that extends beyond mere impartation of values (Hart, 2022). It encompasses a dynamic process of instilling moral and ethical principles, critical thinking, empathy, and social skills in students (Spohrer, 2021). The challenge lies in the translation of these principles into practical behaviour and attitudes that students internalize and apply in their daily lives (Jerome & Kisby, 2022).

Existing literature underscores the need for a comprehensive reevaluation of the methods employed in character education (Hart, 2022; Watts et al., 2021; Spohrer, 2021; Arthur, 2013). It necessitates an exploration of pedagogical strategies, teacher training, curriculum integration, and the role of technology in fostering character development. Moreover, the issue extends beyond the classroom, implicating societal influences, parental involvement, and community engagement in nurturing students' character. Character education delivery in Indonesia demands a more subtle and holistic approach, which underscores the imperative of aligning the process of character education with the intended outcomes, wherein students not only possess knowledge of moral values but also embody these values in their behavior, thus contributing to a more morally upright and responsible society.

The perspective that education encompasses more than just knowledge transfer is deeply rooted in the notion that learning extends beyond the acquisition of facts and information. It is a multifaceted journey that encompasses the harmonious development of intellect, emotion, and willpower. This holistic understanding of education underscores its transformative power, as highlighted by Brunson (2023) and Borah (2021). At its core, education serves as a crucible where not only cognitive faculties but also emotional intelligence and ethical values are forged and refined. It is a dynamic process that shapes individuals into well-rounded beings, capable of not only processing information but also empathizing with others, making ethically sound decisions, and demonstrating resilience in the face of challenges.

This transformative aspect of education finds resonance in the idea that its ultimate goal is not merely the accumulation of knowledge but the cultivation of values and character traits that define humanity (Asa, 2011). Ferary's, (2023) assertion that education is about shaping human character to become truly human encapsulates this perspective. In essence, it implies that education should empower individuals not only to excel academically but also to exhibit compassion, integrity, empathy, and a sense of responsibility. In a world marked by complexity and diversity, the significance of education as a value transformation process cannot be overstated. It equips individuals with the moral compass and emotional intelligence needed to navigate an ever-changing landscape, fostering not just academic success but also responsible citizenship and the betterment of society as a whole.

In building a purposeful education, Ki Hadjar Dewantara conceptualized Indonesia's education and laid the foundation that has supported the countries' educational philosophy (Ferary, 2023). Ki Hadjar Dewantara proposed the Trikon Theory in an effort to build national culture, consisting of three elements: continuity, concentricity, and convergence (Burhanuddin et al., 2021).

Continuity means that character development must be a continuation of one's own culture. Concentricity means that cultural development must be open, critical, and selective toward the influences of the surrounding culture. Foreign cultural elements that can be adopted and accepted should only serve to enrich and enhance the quality of culture after being digested and adjusted to the nation's identity (Widodo, 2018). This emphasizes that character formation must be rooted in the nation's culture while allowing for the accommodation of foreign cultures that are good and in line with the nation's culture. Convergence means that in building the nation's character, along with other nations, efforts should be made to create a global character as a unified world culture (convergence), without sacrificing the identity of each nation. The uniqueness of Indonesian culture does not have to be eliminated in order to build world culture. The Trikon Theory provides guidance that character development and national culture building should be a continuation of one's own culture (continuity) towards the unity of world culture (convergence), while maintaining and developing character within the global human context (concentricity) (Susanto et al., 2019). In this way, the influence of incoming culture must be open and accompanied by a selective attitude to preserve Indonesia's identity.

The Independent Curriculum has been designed to realize the vision of national education (Aini, 2023). The government has made various efforts to bridge character education in schools. However, in its implementation in schools, teachers, especially in the integration of character education in elementary schools, face several challenges. However, with time, the reality has shown a different picture. Immoral

actions are increasingly prevalent among students. This indicates that the implementation of character education in Indonesia has not been fully successful. The issue is not with the values of character offered but rather with the process of conveying and transferring those character traits, which needs improvement and enhancement for effective implementation.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach employed in this comprehensive study was a structured survey (Allan, 2020), meticulously designed to gain valuable insights into the educational landscape of the Province of Bali. The primary focus of this research endeavor was elementary school students, constituting the core subject of investigation.

The target population encompassed the entirety of elementary school students across the expansive Bali Province. This all-encompassing approach aimed to provide a holistic understanding of the educational dynamics within the region.

To ensure the robustness and representativeness of the study, a strategic sampling approach (Brown, 2006) was adopted. Specifically, students in grades IV, V, and VI were selected to participate. Furthermore, a systematic selection process was undertaken, involving the careful selection of two elementary schools from each sub-district within every district across Bali Province. This thoughtful stratification ensured geographic diversity and a comprehensive cross-section of Bali's educational landscape.

For the collection of pertinent data, a multifaceted approach was adopted. Student questionnaires were designed to elicit valuable perspectives directly from the primary subjects of the study—the elementary school students themselves. In addition to this, teacher interview guidelines were crafted to garner insights from the educators responsible for shaping the educational experiences of these students. This dual-pronged data collection strategy was designed to provide a well-rounded and comprehensive understanding of the research area.

Upon successful data acquisition, an intricate process of data analysis was meticulously executed. The collected data, both from student questionnaires and teacher interviews, was subjected to rigorous scrutiny. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis, employing relevant methodologies to identify patterns, trends, and correlations. Simultaneously, qualitative data from teacher interviews underwent thematic analysis (Clarke et al., 2015), allowing for the exploration of rich narratives and in-depth perspectives. This combined approach ensured the robustness of the study's findings and the triangulation of data sources.

Throughout the research process, ethical considerations remained paramount. Stringent measures were adopted to protect the rights and privacy of the participants. Informed consent was obtained from both students and teachers, ensuring their voluntary participation. Furthermore, confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, with all data handled with anonymity to safeguard the identities of those involved.

RESULTS

Drawing from the outcomes of administering surveys to students and conducting interviews with the teachers, the challenges and requirements faced by teachers within individual elementary schools when it comes to delivering character education to students were revealed. A detailed breakdown of these challenges and requirements specific to each district are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Challenges and needs of character education delivery

Regency	Obstacles in providing character education	Teachers' requirements in character education delivery
Badung	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing students with diverse personalities can be challenging due to their varying behaviors. Students may adopt negative behaviors from their surroundings or digital devices, which can hinder their character development and make it harder to instigate change. Insufficient engaging educational resources for character development in classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment and cooperation between various parties, including families, schools and communities More attention, direction and continuous supervision is needed to familiarize students and optimize character education

Regency	Obstacles in providing character education	Teachers' requirements in character education delivery
	settings, particularly in terms of media, pose a concern.	
Bangli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students exhibit a range of characteristics and are raised with diverse parenting approaches. • There's a deficiency in students' comprehension of the consequences of their negative behaviors, such as bullying. • Common deviations in student traits encompass low self-esteem, diminished motivation for learning, apathy toward the educational process, and limited access to supportive resources. • • The diversity in students' backgrounds contributes to variations in their character development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive facilities and infrastructure, commitment, understanding and assistance as well as togetherness with various parties • Collaboration with parents • There is active socialization related to character education • There is a need for special resource persons who provide character education to students so that students do not feel bored.
Buleleng	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students possess unique character traits, necessitating tailored approaches for each individual. • In environments where students encounter unconventional behaviors in their peers and society, they tend to mimic these actions. • The unrestricted use of digital devices can lead students to replicate harmful content they come across. • Students' age and developmental stage play a significant role in shaping their attitudes and emotions. • Communication breakdowns between parents, students, and teachers often result in parents unfairly blaming teachers when their child faces disciplinary action at school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from various parties, both family and community, is needed so that character education can be optimal • Models are needed that can be used as examples by students, including teachers, fellow students, parents and the community. • Character education requires more time and effort so that it can be implemented optimally • The need for education and references for teachers regarding character education • Learning media that can provide education and concrete examples of character education for students • Facilities and infrastructure in schools, media, and outreach about character education
Gianyar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The large number of students who have different characters and backgrounds • Low self-confidence, motivation, and concern • Students are less active in class • Students are not familiar with the existing rules • The character of each student is difficult to change and difficult to manage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities and infrastructure that support character education such as reference books, teaching aids and learning media. • Innovation from teachers in developing student character • Interesting reading books so that students enjoy reading • Various methods are needed to provide character education to students directly which is integrated with classroom learning • Media that supports character

Regency	Obstacles in providing character education	Teachers' requirements in character education delivery
		cultivation such as illustrated stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from various parties such as teachers, parents and the surrounding community
Jembrana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are still in the process of developing positive traits and behaviors. • Many students exhibit deviant character traits that are resistant to change. • The individual variances in students' character, along with their unmonitored bad habits at home, often spill over into their school lives. • Students frequently mimic negative behaviors they encounter while using cellphones and accessing social media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with various parties, including teachers, parents, and the community • The need for facilities and infrastructure that support student character education • An example or example is needed that can be imitated by students
Karangasem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in students' backgrounds and personalities. • Insufficient funding hampers efforts to enhance learning facilities and infrastructure for students. • The insufficient appreciation of character education's significance results in its suboptimal implementation. • Many students still exhibit character deviations, including indiscipline, a lack of focus on learning, a lack of seriousness regarding character education, and a failure to heed teacher guidance, among other issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning media and infrastructure in the classroom • Additional learning and literacy resources, for example reading books, can increase students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning • A personal approach is needed to build the character of each student
Klungkung	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in parenting of students at home and at school and communication with parents • The different characters possessed by each individual are of course different so that the handling of each child is also different. • Character cultivation is generally only done in class so it is not optimal • There is a lack of parental supervision and concern for children's character because parents tend to leave it entirely to the school regarding character education • There are still some children who are less active in learning, lack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and communication between teachers, community and parents • Other sources and media are needed apart from the facilities and infrastructure that already exist in schools to develop student character • Character cultivation is carried out continuously or sustainably, not just once or twice

Regency	Obstacles in providing character education	Teachers' requirements in character education delivery
	confidence, and have low learning motivation	
Tabanan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient facilities, infrastructure and facilities • The number of educators/teachers is still lacking, • The number of PTK is lacking in developing character education • The students' different characters and personalities • Negative influence of technological developments • There are still many students with deviant characters such as lack of self-confidence, less active in learning and low learning motivation • Every child has habits from home that are difficult to change • Students are still indifferent to displays/posters/slogans related to character education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for habituation every day in providing character education • Various and interesting learning media are needed for students so that character education can be carried out in a fun way • It is necessary to bring in certain sources who can provide socialization related to character education to students • More adequate facilities and infrastructure are needed to develop students' interests, talents, and character • Collaboration between parents, teachers and various parties is required • There needs to be real examples from educators regarding positive character
Denpasar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character education cannot be done instantly because it requires a long time and process • Students often forget easily so they have to be reminded repeatedly • Some children have brought their own characters from home so that some bad characters are also brought to school • The tendency of students to only do good behavior in front of the teacher and not continue outside of school. • Character cultivation at school is often not in line with parenting parents at home • Parents and schools have not established good communication regarding character education • Limited only to giving examples directly by the teacher • Environmental influences and the negative impacts of technological developments often cause children's characters to become deviant because children imitate what they see. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation and harmony between school, family and community • There needs to be deeper strengthening so that children are motivated to have good character for themselves, not for other people. • There is a need for more intense collaboration and communication between schools and parents to jointly build children's character. • Apart from providing examples from teachers, there needs to be other, more creative and interesting programs related to character education

Based on the Table 1. above, it is crucial to adopt a proactive and holistic approach to address the challenges and opportunities in character education for elementary school students. This comprehensive strategy entails prioritizing the development of a comprehensive character education curriculum that is seamlessly integrated into the overall academic framework. This curriculum should not only focus on

moral values but also on critical thinking, empathy, and social skills. The strategy should also entail professional development for teachers as they play a pivotal role in character education. Offering continuous professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their skills in imparting character education is essential. This includes training on utilizing technology-based tools and resources effectively.

Parental and Community Involvement engagement in character education initiatives through workshops, seminars, and community events can be organized more to foster collaboration and understanding among all stakeholders. In addition, technology integration as a supportive tool for character education through provision of digital resources such as interactive apps, educational games, and digital comics that align with character education objectives. Encourage responsible gadget use among students.

Moreover, uptake of research and assessment of the impact of character education programs on student behavior and outcomes can help refine and improve these programs based on empirical evidence. Furthermore, schools should also actively promote a culture of empathy, inclusion, and diversity. This can be achieved through initiatives like peer mentoring, anti-bullying campaigns, and inclusive classroom practices. Also worth considering is the Establishment of dedicated character education committees within schools, consisting of teachers, parents, and community members can oversee the planning, implementation, and evaluation of character education initiatives. Finally, maintaining open lines of communication among teachers, parents, and students to address concerns, share successes, and reinforce the importance of character education in the broader context of a child's development should be considered. Adopting these proactive strategies can enable education practitioners and schools navigate the evolving landscape of character education, ensuring that students are equipped with the values and skills necessary to become responsible, compassionate, and engaged members of society.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings derived from the distribution of questionnaires and interviews conducted with teachers, it becomes evident that there exists a multitude of challenges and requirements for teachers in the provision of character education across various districts. While these challenges and needs may exhibit distinct characteristics in each district, certain commonalities also emerge. Broadly speaking, the hindrances faced by educators in nurturing student character, as illustrated in Table 1, can be categorized into two main groups: those stemming from intrinsic student factors and those arising due to external influences.

One of the primary obstacles frequently encountered by teachers emanates from the diverse characteristics inherent to individual students themselves. Each child possesses inherent traits and personalities that are ingrained and resistant to change. Teachers function as guides, steering students toward a positive character trajectory, a process that demands considerable time and effort. Character education must be an ongoing, gradual endeavor. Additionally, teachers must lead by example, serving as role models for their students. Through consistent exposure to these positive character traits within the school environment, it is hoped that students will internalize and adopt these qualities as habitual behaviors, even in the absence of explicit instruction from their teachers.

Recognizing the critical window for character development, it is imperative to commence character education as early as possible. Character traits tend to solidify and become resistant to change as individuals' progress into adulthood. According to Syar (2020), elementary school students, typically aged 7-12 years, are at a developmental stage referred to as the concrete operational stage, during which they begin to cultivate logical thinking and reduce egocentric tendencies. Initiating character education during this formative phase aims to equip students with the knowledge to differentiate between right and wrong. This approach is intended to empower students to employ logic in their decision-making processes, effectively discerning what is acceptable and what is not. Furthermore, students are encouraged to develop heightened awareness of their surroundings, encompassing both the environment and their fellow human beings, in a bid to gradually diminish their inherent egocentric tendencies.

Character development is fundamentally crucial for students to actively engage and excel in their learning endeavors at school. When a significant number of students display character deviations, such as a lack of discipline, it poses challenges for teachers in delivering effective lessons. Furthermore, teaching efforts are rendered futile when students themselves are disengaged. Consequently, character education takes precedence as the initial focus in schools, even preceding the delivery of academic content.

It is imperative to acknowledge that each student possesses inherent character traits that are deeply ingrained and resistant to complete alteration or elimination. Consequently, despite teachers' dedicated efforts towards character development, many still encounter difficulties, as some students exhibit stubbornness, reluctance to heed instructions, indifference, and even a tendency to showcase good behavior solely in the presence of their teachers, especially within the school context. This poses a

formidable challenge for educators since each student's character is a unique amalgamation shaped primarily during their early upbringing and initial education, primarily at home.

Diverse parenting styles and the influences students receive from their immediate environment constitute external factors that significantly impact character development. As students spend the majority of their time at home with their families, parents assume the foremost role in shaping a child's education. Consequently, children frequently emulate the behaviors modeled by their parents. Early teachings by parents, whether positive or negative, leave a lasting imprint on a child's character that persists into their school-age years. The absence of early attention and positive role modeling by parents can lead to the formation of unfavorable character traits that become deeply entrenched as the child advances in age. Additionally, society and peer interactions also exert a significant influence on a student's character. Teachers often grapple with the challenge of students bringing habits and behaviors from their external environment that do not align with the norms expected within the school setting. This can manifest in various ways, including inappropriate communication with teachers or fellow students.

Elementary school students, being children, are particularly impressionable and tend to emulate their surroundings. Their ability to discern between right and wrong is often limited, leading them to follow what they witness without fully comprehending the consequences. Students are surrounded by peers and community members in their immediate environment, from whom they derive valuable experiences. Social interactions in this environment expose them to both positive and negative influences. Undesirable behaviors learned from their surroundings may find their way into the school context, underscoring the significance of environmental and societal factors in shaping a student's character.

Beyond the influence of parenting styles, the environment, and society, the impact of contemporary technological advancements on character development cannot be overlooked. In today's digital age, gadgets have become ubiquitous, even among elementary school children. While gadgets can enhance various aspects of life, including education, their use must be closely supervised and limited, given that not all content aligns with a child's developmental level.

In light of these technological developments, it's essential to recognize that gadgets have permeated various age groups, including elementary school children. While these devices undeniably offer convenience and educational benefits, they must be used judiciously, especially considering that not all content is suitable for a child's level of development. Therefore, educators and parents alike face the responsibility of closely monitoring and regulating gadget usage to ensure that children are exposed to age-appropriate, beneficial content.

Character education plays a pivotal role in facilitating effective learning environments for elementary school students. Challenges stemming from intrinsic student traits and external influences, such as parenting styles, the immediate environment, societal factors, and technological advancements, all contribute to the complexity of character development. Recognizing the unique characteristics of each student, as well as the multifaceted factors at play, is crucial for educators and parents in shaping well-rounded individuals who not only excel academically but also exhibit positive character traits that will serve them well throughout their lives. Balancing these influences and fostering a harmonious educational environment is an ongoing endeavor that requires the collaboration of educators, parents, and society as a whole.

In several districts, a noteworthy issue has arisen where students frequently emulate deviant behaviors observed and learned through their interaction with electronic gadgets. This underscores the significant influence of technology on students' character development. The pervasive use of gadgets has the tendency to render students less attentive and less attuned to their immediate surroundings as their focus gravitates towards the digital content displayed on these devices. Consequently, it is imperative to exercise restraint and vigilant supervision over gadget usage to prevent and mitigate the emergence of undesirable character traits in students due to prolonged exposure to digital media.

These diverse obstacles undoubtedly pose a formidable challenge for educators striving to nurture the character of their students. Consequently, the provision of character education in schools necessitates a multifaceted support system that can bolster its effectiveness. Beyond the classroom, it is imperative to garner support from various external stakeholders such as parents, peers, and the wider community to optimize character education, particularly beyond the school setting. Within the school environment, character education also hinges on the availability of supportive facilities and infrastructure. Adequate provisions such as desks, chairs, blackboards, and educational materials, coupled with well-maintained infrastructure encompassing classrooms, playgrounds, and library facilities, contribute to a conducive and comfortable learning atmosphere. A conducive learning environment, in turn, facilitates the seamless delivery of character education within the broader curriculum framework.

In addition to the prerequisite facilities and infrastructure, the seamless integration of character education into the learning process necessitates the presence of appropriate educational tools, including

instructional media. As per the data outlined in Table 1, several districts have expressed the need for instructional materials that can captivate students' interest and motivate them to engage with character education content. Currently, the available learning materials related to character education are primarily confined to conventional storybooks found in school libraries. Furthermore, character education has predominantly been administered verbally, often through appeals or admonishments from teachers. Regrettably, this verbal approach can lead to misunderstandings among students and their parents, ultimately culminating in miscommunication. Parents who perceive their child as being reprimanded by the teacher may, in turn, hold the teacher responsible for the disciplinary actions. This complicates the teacher's role in effectively implementing character education within the school. Consequently, there is a pressing need for learning media that can assist teachers in delivering character education content to students. Through these specialized learning materials, students are expected to gain a deeper appreciation for the significance of character education and subsequently apply these values in their everyday lives.

One particularly promising form of media that can serve as a valuable support tool for character education is the use of illustrated stories or comics that students can readily peruse. This approach is expected to not only pique students' interest in reading but also leverage the captivating appeal of illustrated stories or comics, which inherently resonate with elementary school students. Within this medium, students can not only immerse themselves in narratives that encapsulate the essence of character education but also visually absorb illustrative depictions that serve as tangible examples of these moral values. Students may further identify with the characters in these stories, which, in turn, encourages them to emulate the depicted positive traits.

The responsibility for providing learning media that aligns with the character education curriculum naturally falls on the shoulders of educators. Given the emphasis on student autonomy within this independent curriculum, educators must adapt by offering character education materials that resonate with tech-savvy students. Given the ubiquity of technology, particularly the prevalence of gadgets among elementary school students, digital comics present a compelling alternative for integrating character education into the learning process. The familiarity of students with technology, coupled with their frequent interaction with gadgets for both educational and recreational purposes, underscores the need for technology-driven learning materials. In this context, technology-based learning media, such as digital comics, emerge as a viable means to infuse character education seamlessly into the educational landscape and cater to the evolving needs of contemporary students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our exploration into the multifaceted realm of character education in the context of elementary schools has unearthed a series of intricate challenges and dependencies. Character development, being the bedrock of a student's educational journey, requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The influence of technology, specifically the omnipresence of gadgets, has presented a dual-edged sword, shaping both opportunities and perils in character education. The need for vigilant supervision and responsible usage of technology is underscored, with educators and parents sharing the onus of guiding students towards a balanced and constructive interaction with digital media.

Furthermore, the role of the immediate environment, encompassing familial upbringing and societal influences, cannot be overstated. The nexus between character development and early parental guidance lays the foundation upon which students build their moral compass. It is here that character traits are cultivated, whether positive or negative, leaving a lasting impact on a student's character profile. Education, especially character education, thrives within a supportive ecosystem. Beyond facilities, infrastructure, and instructional materials, the collaboration between teachers, parents, peers, and the broader community is essential for holistic character development. A harmonious synergy among these stakeholders serves as the bedrock for nurturing well-rounded individuals who excel academically and exude positive character traits, enriching both their personal lives and society as a whole. In this evolving educational landscape, characterized by digital innovation and changing societal dynamics, it is imperative that we adapt and provide students with the tools and resources necessary for holistic character development. Only through this collaborative and forward-thinking approach can we empower students to become responsible, empathetic, and resilient individuals who contribute positively to their communities and the world at large.

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