

Improving the Quality of National Education Through the Integrity of Educational Psychology in the Curriculum

Erni Ratna Dewi¹, Kandi², Lela Nurlaila³

¹ Universitas Islam Makassar

² Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah (STIT) Al-Amin Indramayu

³ Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Cirebon

E-mail: erniratnadewi68@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the integration of educational psychology into the curriculum as a strategy to improve the quality of national education. The background of this study is based on the fact that the quality of education in Indonesia still faces various challenges, particularly in aspects of learning motivation and student psychological development. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method, where data are collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies of teachers, principals, and students in several secondary schools that have implemented psychological approaches in learning. The results show that the integration of educational psychology into the curriculum can increase student participation, create a more conducive learning environment, and encourage a more balanced academic and non-academic achievement. However, its implementation still faces obstacles such as limited teacher training and a lack of explicit policy support. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of educators and more systematic policies are needed to realize a curriculum that is holistic and responsive to the psychological needs of students.

Kata Kunci: educational psychology, national curriculum, quality of education, holistic approach

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✉ Corresponding author : Erni Ratna Dewi

erniratnadewi68@gmail.com

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Introduction

The quality of national education in Indonesia still faces various complex and ongoing challenges. One key indicator of this is the low level of student literacy and numeracy, as reflected in various assessment results, both nationally and internationally, such as the National Assessment (AN) and internationally, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). These assessment results indicate that the majority of students have not achieved the minimum competencies required to face the challenges of the 21st century. This low level of achievement not only reflects problems in the learning process but is also closely related to systemic factors such as teacher quality, unequal access to education, lack of adequate learning resources, and the suboptimal role of school management and quality control. This situation is a serious concern because it directly impacts the nation's competitiveness and the readiness of the younger generation to face global challenges (Sain et al., 2024).

The curriculum in Indonesia still tends to be oriented towards mastering cognitive aspects, such as the ability to memorize, understand, and work on academic problems, so that learning places more emphasis on achieving grades and intellectual achievements alone (Musnandar & Salim, 2024). Meanwhile, psychological aspects and student character, including values such as empathy, responsibility, honesty, discipline, and adaptability, have not been optimally integrated into the classroom learning process. Yet, character education and student psychological development play a crucial role in shaping holistic and competitive individuals. This imbalance can impact students' ability

to face social, emotional, and ethical challenges in real life. Therefore, a holistic curriculum transformation is needed that focuses on the holistic development of students, not only as intellectually intelligent individuals but also as emotionally and socially mature individuals (Hanafiah et al., 2024).

Educational psychology, as a branch of science that understands student learning processes and behaviors, plays a crucial role in designing learning strategies appropriate to the characteristics and developmental stages of students. Through an educational psychology approach, teachers can recognize individual differences, learning styles, motivations, and emotional and social conditions that influence students' learning processes. This understanding enables educators to create a conducive learning environment, develop adaptive learning methods, and provide appropriate interventions for students experiencing learning difficulties (Mallillin, 2022).

Furthermore, educational psychology also helps develop learning evaluations that measure not only cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects, allowing education to take place more holistically. Thus, the integration of educational psychology principles into learning practices is an important foundation for creating an inclusive, effective education that is oriented toward optimal student development (Hammond et al., 2020).

A curriculum integrated with the principles of educational psychology is believed to have a positive impact on improving the overall quality of learning processes and outcomes. By incorporating a psychological approach into curriculum design, learning focuses not only on academic achievement but also considers important aspects such as emotional needs, intrinsic motivation, learning styles, and students' social development. A curriculum that is responsive to students' psychological conditions tends to increase learning motivation, encourage active participation in class, and create a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience (Sahara & Khaudli, 2025).

Furthermore, this approach allows teachers to design more adaptive and differentiated learning according to the developmental stage and individual abilities of students. Thus, integrating educational psychology into the curriculum is an important strategy for realizing humanistic, participatory learning that is oriented toward developing students' potential holistically (Amini et al., 2025).

With global developments and the increasing complexity of challenges in education, a holistic learning approach is becoming increasingly relevant and necessary. It is no longer sufficient for education to focus solely on academic achievement or cognitive aspects, as the realities of today's life demand individuals who also possess emotional intelligence, social skills, and strong character. Students' affective and socio-emotional aspects, such as the ability to manage emotions, empathize, collaborate, and deal with stress and conflict, must be an integral part of the educational process. Current challenges such as technological disruption, social pressure, and the value crisis require the education system to be more adaptive and humane (Priti Singh, 2025). Therefore, the integration of a holistic approach in learning practices is very important in order to form students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also emotionally mature, have character, and are ready to face the dynamics of global life wisely and competitively (Maduerawa et al., 2025).

The practice of implementing the integration of educational psychology into the curriculum in Indonesia still faces various obstacles, especially related to gaps in the quality and availability of educational resources (Widiastuti, 2025). In many areas, particularly remote or less developed ones, the integration of educational psychology principles remains uneven and poorly standardized. This is due to the limited number of educators with a deep understanding of educational psychology, the lack of ongoing professional training, and the minimal policy support that encourages the application of psychological approaches in the learning process (Chidley & Stringer, 2020).

As a result, students in these areas often do not receive learning that meets their developmental needs, including cognitive, affective, and socio-emotional ones. Consistent application of educational psychology can help teachers understand student characteristics more comprehensively, making learning more inclusive and effective. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed from the government and education stakeholders to strengthen teacher capacity, develop clear implementation guidelines, and ensure equitable distribution of educational quality across Indonesia (Mujiburrohman & Putri, 2024).

There remains a research gap regarding the integration of educational psychology theory into the context of the Indonesian national curriculum. Most existing studies tend to focus solely on cognitive aspects of curriculum development, without delving deeply into the contribution of educational psychology to improving learning effectiveness (Setiawan & Suwandi, 2022). Furthermore, there are still few empirical studies that directly observe how teachers implement the

principles of educational psychology in their daily classroom practices. Furthermore, there are still few curriculum models that systematically accommodate students' psychological needs, even though this aspect plays a crucial role in creating meaningful and sustainable learning experiences. This gap indicates the need for more comprehensive research to bridge educational psychology theory with the actual practice of the national curriculum (Koban et al., 2019).

Although educational psychology theory has been extensively studied, its systematic implementation in the national curriculum remains limited. Many curricula do not fully incorporate educational psychology principles such as individual approaches, positive reinforcement, and holistic student character development. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical studies evaluating the impact of integrating educational psychology on improving the quality of education nationally. Limited understanding and readiness of educators to apply educational psychology principles in the classroom also poses a barrier. Furthermore, there is currently no national curriculum model that explicitly incorporates elements of educational psychology into all aspects of learning. Current curricula tend to focus on academic achievement, while student psychological well-being, as a crucial indicator for improving educational quality, has rarely been addressed in previous research.

This study aims to identify and analyze in depth the role of educational psychology integration in the Indonesian national curriculum. The main focus of this study is to evaluate the extent to which educational psychology principles have been adopted in curriculum design and implementation, and how this integration impacts the improvement of educational quality. Specifically, this study highlights three main aspects: student learning motivation, student psychological well-being, and the effectiveness of the classroom learning process. By understanding the relationship between educational psychology and the curriculum, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more humanistic educational policies oriented towards the holistic development of students. Furthermore, the results of this study are also expected to serve as a reference for educators and curriculum designers in formulating adaptive, inclusive, and student-centered learning strategies.

Methodology

The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study type of research, aiming to understand in depth the integration of educational psychology in the curriculum to improve the quality of national education (Viera, 2023). The research was conducted in several secondary schools that have implemented a character-based curriculum and a psychological approach. Informants in this study consisted of teachers, principals, counselors, and students who were selected purposively based on their involvement in the learning process. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies of the curriculum, syllabus, and teaching materials. The research instruments included a semi-structured interview guide, observation notes, and a document analysis format. Data were analyzed thematically through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing using open coding and axial coding techniques. To maintain the validity of the data, triangulation of sources and techniques was used, as well as member checking and discussions between researchers. This study also paid attention to ethical aspects by maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities and obtaining written consent from all participants.

Results and Discussion

Research results indicate that teachers and educators generally recognize the importance of educational psychology principles in the learning process, but many still do not fully understand how to integrate them effectively into classroom practice. Implementing educational psychology values such as empathy, intrinsic motivation, and positive reinforcement has been shown to increase student participation and enthusiasm for learning. Schools that have adopted a psychological approach in their curriculum have shown positive developments in students' non-cognitive aspects, such as increased self-confidence, discipline, and the quality of social relationships between students. However, the main obstacles to implementing educational psychology integration are the lack of professional training for teachers and the lack of explicit policy support from the government. Curricula oriented toward educational psychology have proven to be more flexible and adaptive to the needs of students, especially those with learning difficulties or from vulnerable family backgrounds. Furthermore, a significant gap was found between curriculum planning and implementation in the field, particularly in the consistent application of learning strategies based on child developmental psychology.

The Role of Educational Psychology in Curriculum Transformation

Educational psychology plays a crucial role in driving curriculum transformation to be more responsive to student needs and development. In the context of modern education, curricula can no longer be designed solely based on academic achievement targets, but must also consider students' psychological dimensions, such as motivation, emotions, personality, and social skills (Hidupi et al., 2024). Through an educational psychology approach, curricula can be designed in a more humanistic way, taking into account individual differences, learning styles, and the stages of students' cognitive and affective development. This encourages a more inclusive, adaptive, and meaningful learning process. Educational psychology also helps identify factors that influence students' readiness to learn and provides a scientific basis for the development of effective learning methods and fair evaluation strategies. In the process of curriculum transformation, the role of educational psychology is a crucial foundation for ensuring that the education system is capable of producing a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and socially balanced, and ready to face the increasingly complex challenges of life in the global era (Riyadi et al., 2025).

Realizing a Humanistic Curriculum Through Educational Psychology

Realizing a humanistic curriculum is an urgent need in the modern education system, especially amidst the challenges of globalization and the complexity of current social dynamics (Wibowo & Salfadilah, 2025). The humanistic approach places students as the primary subjects in the educational process, respecting the diversity, potential, and uniqueness of each individual. In this context, educational psychology plays a strategic role as a scientific foundation supporting the design and implementation of student-centered curricula. By understanding the cognitive, affective, social, and emotional development of students, educational psychology helps teachers and curriculum designers create safe, supportive, and motivating learning environments (Sihono & Hamami, 2025). Values such as empathy, self-respect, autonomous learning, and character building can be systematically integrated into the curriculum through the principles of humanistic psychology. Thus, the curriculum becomes not only a tool for transferring knowledge, but also a means of developing holistic individuals who think critically, have a social conscience, and possess moral integrity. This effort is an important step towards creating a more just, inclusive, and meaningful education system for all students (Amaliyah et al., 2025).

Psychological Approach in National Curriculum Reform

National curriculum reform cannot be separated from the importance of a psychological approach as a foundation in designing an adaptive, relevant, and student-centered education system (Ibrahim et al., 2025). The psychological approach in this context refers to the use of principles of educational psychology to more comprehensively understand students' learning needs, developmental characteristics, and emotional and social dynamics. In the reform process, this approach encourages the development of a curriculum that not only emphasizes mastery of academic content but also provides space for strengthening affective aspects, such as empathy, self-confidence, and emotional regulation (Judijanto, 2025a). By understanding individual differences and student backgrounds, curricula can be designed to be more flexible, responsive, and inclusive, accommodating diverse learning styles and special needs. Furthermore, a psychological approach supports the development of holistic evaluation methods that do not rely solely on written tests as a measure of success. Within the framework of national curriculum reform, integrating a psychological perspective is key to creating an education system that not only fosters intelligence but also shapes students' character and mental readiness to face the rapid and complex changes of the times (Primary, 2019).

Building Holistic Education through Educational Psychology

Holistic education is an approach that positions students as whole individuals who develop not only intellectually, but also emotionally, socially, morally and spiritually (Fitrianto, 2023). In the effort to build holistic education, educational psychology plays a central role as a foundation for understanding and directing the learning process according to the developmental needs of each student. Through the principles of educational psychology, educators can identify students' potential, interests, learning styles, and psychological conditions, so that learning can be designed to be more personalized, relevant, and meaningful. Furthermore, educational psychology enables the integration of character values, self-confidence, empathy, and social skills into the daily learning process (Judijanto, 2025). Thus, education is no longer solely oriented toward academic achievement, but also

toward the development of a balanced and competitive personality amidst global challenges. Building holistic education through an educational psychology approach means creating a friendly, supportive, and empowering learning environment, where each student feels valued, understood, and guided to grow according to their full potential (Syachbana & Rahmah, 2023).

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study indicates that the integration of educational psychology into the curriculum has been proven to improve the quality of national education, particularly in aspects of learning motivation, active participation, and student emotional well-being. Principles of educational psychology, such as positive reinforcement, individual approaches, and holistic potential development, are the main drivers of creating a more humanistic, inclusive, and effective learning process. However, its implementation still faces various obstacles, including limited teacher competency in understanding students' psychological aspects and the lack of a standard model for integrating educational psychology into curriculum design. Schools that have implemented this approach have shown significant improvements in the learning environment, discipline, and student academic achievement, although implementation remains limited and uneven across Indonesia. Therefore, more systematic policy support from the government, as well as ongoing teacher training programs, are needed to ensure optimal implementation of a curriculum oriented towards students' psychological development and needs. This study emphasizes the importance of an educational approach that focuses not only on cognitive aspects but also balances the intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions in the effort to build a national education system that is more qualified, relevant, and competitive.

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