

Fitrah-Based Curriculum Management for Holistic Student Character Development: A Case Study

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Abstract. This study addresses the gap between the national education goal of developing holistic human beings and educational practices that often prioritize cognitive achievement over character formation. A fitrah-based curriculum offers a holistic approach by emphasizing the development of students' innate potential, encompassing spiritual, intellectual, social, and moral dimensions. This study aims to analyze the management of a fitrah-based curriculum in shaping student character at Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis involving school principals, teachers, students, and parents. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, while data trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and audit trails. The analytical framework was guided by Fayol's management functions, including planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation and supervision. The findings indicate that fitrah-based curriculum management is implemented systematically across all management stages. Curriculum planning is grounded in fitrah philosophy and Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Organizing strategies emphasize the utilization of natural environments as learning ecosystems and collaborative human resources. Implementation focuses on experiential and values-based learning through methods such as spider web and action learning. Evaluation and supervision are conducted holistically through character observation, reflective practices, and intensive school-parent collaboration. The study concludes that fitrah-based curriculum management is an effective model for fostering balanced and holistic student character development.

Keywords: Curriculum Management, Fitrah-Based Curriculum, Character Education, Nature-Based School, Holistic education

1 Introduction

Education fundamentally aims to develop the whole person, encompassing spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions [1]. This holistic orientation is aligned with the concept of *insan kamil*, which emphasizes balanced human development based on innate potential or *fitrah* [2]. In the Indonesian context, this vision is explicitly

articulated in the National Education System Act No. 20 of 2003, which mandates education to foster individuals who are faithful, morally upright, knowledgeable, creative, independent, and socially responsible[3].

However, contemporary educational practices often demonstrate a significant discrepancy between these ideals and their implementation. Formal schooling tends to prioritize cognitive achievement and academic performance, frequently measured through standardized assessments, while marginalizing character development, creativity, and moral formation[4]–[6]. This imbalance has contributed to various educational challenges, including declining student motivation, weakened character values, and increasing behavioral and emotional problems among learners. Such conditions indicate a structural gap between national educational goals and school-level practices.

In response to this gap, alternative educational models have emerged that seek to reorient learning toward holistic human development. One such model is the *fitrah*-based curriculum, which emphasizes the cultivation of children's innate potential through integrated spiritual, intellectual, and social development. Rooted in Islamic educational philosophy, this approach aligns curriculum design and learning processes with values derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, while simultaneously engaging students in meaningful, contextual learning experiences [7]–[10].

Nature-based schools (*Sekolah Alam*) represent a practical manifestation of *fitrah*-based education. By utilizing the natural environment as a primary learning medium, these schools create experiential learning spaces that encourage inquiry, responsibility, cooperation, and moral awareness. Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek exemplify this approach by integrating nature, spirituality, and innovative pedagogical strategies into their curriculum structures. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such approaches is highly dependent on how the curriculum is systematically managed at the institutional level.

Curriculum management plays a critical role in ensuring that educational philosophies are translated into coherent and sustainable practices.[11]–[13] Effective curriculum management involves systematic planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision to align educational objectives, learning activities, and assessment with institutional values. Although several studies have examined character education and alternative curricula, much of the existing literature focuses on instructional outcomes or pedagogical methods, with limited attention to curriculum management processes—particularly within the context of *fitrah*-based education [10], [14]–[16].

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on *fitrah*-based curriculum management as a strategic and systemic process for character formation. Rather than examining curriculum content alone, this research positions curriculum management as a central mechanism through which character education is operationalized. By employing Fayol's management cycle planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision this study offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how *fitrah*-based values are embedded, enacted, and sustained within school systems [17].

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze and describe the implementation of *fitrah*-based curriculum management in shaping student character at Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek. Specifically, the research seeks to examine how

curriculum planning is designed, how learning resources and environments are organized, how fitrah-based learning is implemented in daily practices, and how evaluation and supervision contribute to continuous character development. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the field of educational management and practically to schools seeking holistic and value-based curriculum models.

2 Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of the processes and meanings underlying the management of a fitrah-based curriculum in shaping student character. Qualitative inquiry enables researchers to explore educational phenomena holistically within their natural settings, emphasizing context, interaction, and participants' perspectives rather than numerical measurement [18], [19]. The case study design was considered appropriate because it allows for an intensive examination of a bounded system, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined [20], [21].

The research was conducted at two nature-based schools, namely Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek. These sites were purposively selected due to their explicit implementation of a fitrah-based curriculum and their consistent focus on character education through nature-oriented learning. The primary participants included school principals and teachers, as they play central roles in curriculum planning, organization, implementation, and supervision. Students were involved as supporting informants to provide insights into learning experiences, while parents were included to enrich contextual understanding of character development beyond the school environment.

Data were collected through methodological triangulation, consisting of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with principals and teachers to explore curriculum management strategies, underlying values, and decision-making processes. Participant observation allowed the researcher to directly observe learning activities, school routines, and interactions that reflect character formation in everyday practice. Document analysis involved reviewing curriculum documents, lesson plans, school programs, evaluation reports, and institutional guidelines to corroborate data obtained from interviews and observations [22]–[24].

In this qualitative study, the researcher served as the primary research instrument, as data interpretation was closely connected to the researcher's engagement with participants and the research setting [25]. To support systematic data collection, supporting instruments were developed, including interview guides, observation protocols, and document review matrices. These instruments ensured consistency while allowing flexibility to capture emerging themes during fieldwork.

Data trustworthiness was ensured by applying four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through triangulation of data sources and techniques, as well as member

checking to verify participants' statements. Transferability was addressed by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the research context. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened through the use of audit trails, systematic documentation of research procedures, and reflective notes to minimize researcher bias [23].

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [26], which consists of three interconnected stages: (1) data reduction, involving the selection, coding, and condensation of raw data; (2) data display, where data were organized into narrative descriptions, matrices, and tables to facilitate interpretation; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, in which patterns and themes were identified and continuously validated throughout the research process. Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection, allowing the researcher to adaptively refine analytical focus based on emerging findings.

The research was conducted over a four-month period, encompassing preparation, field data collection, data analysis, and report writing. Through this methodological framework, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and credible account of fitrah-based curriculum management practices and their role in shaping student character in nature-based schools.

3 Results

3.1 Planning of Fitrah-Based Curriculum Management

Planning represents a fundamental stage in the management of a fitrah-based curriculum, as it determines the direction, values, and objectives of character education. Findings from interviews, participant observations, and document analysis at Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek indicate that curriculum planning is intentionally designed to develop students' innate potential (fitrah) in a holistic and balanced manner.

Interview data reveal that curriculum planning in both schools is grounded in philosophical and spiritual foundations derived from Islamic values. School leaders and teachers emphasized that curriculum goals extend beyond academic achievement to include moral integrity, independence, and social responsibility. One school principal stated:

"Curriculum planning at our school begins with an understanding of the child's fitrah (innate nature). We believe that every child has inherent potential that should be developed, rather than being forced to follow academic standards alone."(Principal, interview, Sept 2025)

A teacher from Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek further explained that character formation is explicitly embedded in curriculum objectives:

"When designing the curriculum, we do not only set knowledge targets, but also determine the character traits we want to develop, such as responsibility, honesty, and care for the environment." (Teacher, interview, Sept 2025)

These statements indicate that curriculum planning is value-driven and oriented toward holistic character development.

Observational data support the interview findings by showing that learning activities are planned thematically and contextually. Teachers prepare learning scenarios that integrate spiritual reflection, experiential learning in nature, and social interaction. Daily routines such as morning reflections, nature exploration, and group activities are intentionally planned as part of character education. Observations also reveal that lesson planning allows flexibility to accommodate students’ interests and natural learning rhythms.

Document analysis of curriculum guidelines, lesson plans, and school programs confirms that fitrah-based principles are formally articulated in planning documents. Curriculum plans reference values derived from the Qur’an and Sunnah, alongside national curriculum standards. Learning objectives emphasize character indicators such as discipline, independence, cooperation, and environmental awareness. This documentation demonstrates that fitrah-based planning is systematically integrated rather than implemented incidentally.

Table 1 summarizes key planning strategies employed in the management of the fitrah-based curriculum.

Table 1. Planning Strategies in Fitrah-Based Curriculum Management

No.	Planning Aspect	Fitrah-Based Orientation	Description
1	Curriculum objectives	Holistic character development	Objectives integrate spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions
2	Philosophical foundation	Qur’an and Sunnah values	Curriculum rooted in Islamic worldview and fitrah concept
3	Learning themes	Nature-based and contextual	Themes designed around real-life and environmental experiences
4	Character indicators	Moral and social values	Focus on responsibility, independence, cooperation, and integrity
5	Planning flexibility	Child-centered approach	Curriculum allows adaptation to students’ interests and development

Source: Interviews, observations, and document analysis (2025)

Overall, the planning stage demonstrates that fitrah-based curriculum management is strategically oriented toward character formation. School leaders and teachers act as curriculum managers who consciously translate philosophical values into structured educational plans. The findings suggest that value-based and child-centered planning serves as a critical foundation for organizing learning environments, implementing instructional strategies, and evaluating character development outcomes in nature-based schools.

3.2 Organizing of Fitrah-Based Curriculum Management

The organizing stage focuses on how curriculum plans are translated into structured arrangements of resources, roles, and learning environments to support fitrah-based character education. Findings from interviews, participant observations, and document analysis at Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek indicate that curriculum organization is intentionally designed to maximize the use of natural environments and collaborative human resources.

Interview data reveal that curriculum organization in both schools emphasizes the strategic use of the natural environment as an integral learning resource. School leaders and teachers described organization not merely as task allocation, but as the arrangement of learning ecosystems that support students' character development. One school principal explained:

"Curriculum organization in a nature-based school is not only about the distribution of teachers' duties, but also about how the environment, schedule, and activities are arranged so that children learn in a natural and meaningful way." (Principal, interview, Sept 2025)

A teacher from Sekolah Alam Bandung highlighted the collaborative nature of curriculum organization:

"We work as a team. Each teacher is responsible for a specific theme, but we continue to coordinate with one another to ensure that learning and character-building practices run in harmony." (Teacher, interview, Sept 2025)

These statements indicate that organizing is viewed as a collective and systemic process.

Participant observations show that learning spaces are deliberately organized beyond conventional classrooms. Sekolah Alam Bandung utilizes open fields, gardens, rice fields, and nearby forest areas as learning environments, while Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek organizes learning through facilities such as mini zoos, gardens, and outdoor activity zones. Teachers and students move flexibly between learning spaces according to thematic learning objectives.

Observations also reveal clear role distribution among teachers and facilitators. Teachers function as learning facilitators, while students are encouraged to take responsibility for learning activities, such as preparing tools, maintaining the environment, and collaborating in group tasks. This organizational structure supports independence and responsibility as core character values.

Document analysis of school organizational structures, teaching schedules, and activity programs confirms that curriculum organization is systematically documented. Documents indicate the integration of learning themes with environmental resources and extracurricular activities. Organizational guidelines also emphasize collaboration among teachers, parental involvement, and alignment between academic and character education programs. Table 2 summarizes the organizing strategies employed in fitrah-based curriculum management.

Table 2. Organizing Strategies in Fitrah-Based Curriculum Management

No.	Organizing Aspect	Organizational Strategy	Description
1	Learning environment	Nature-based organization	Utilization of natural spaces as primary learning environments
2	Human resources	Collaborative teamwork	Teachers work in teams to manage thematic learning
3	Role distribution	Facilitator–learner model	Teachers act as facilitators; students are active participants
4	Learning schedule	Flexible and adaptive	Learning schedules adjusted to themes and student needs
5	Parental involvement	School–home collaboration	Parents involved in supporting character education programs

Source: Interviews, participant observations, and document analysis (2025)

The organizing stage demonstrates that fitrah-based curriculum management requires a flexible and contextual organizational structure. By organizing learning environments, human resources, and schedules around natural and social contexts, schools create a coherent system that supports holistic character development. These findings indicate that effective curriculum organization functions as a bridge between philosophical curriculum planning and meaningful instructional implementation.

3.3 Implementation of Fitrah-Based Curriculum Management

The implementation stage reflects how fitrah-based curriculum plans and organizational arrangements are enacted in daily learning practices. Findings from interviews, participant observations, and document analysis at Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek show that curriculum implementation is centered on experiential learning, student engagement, and the internalization of character values through direct interaction with nature and social environments.

Interview data indicate that teachers deliberately implement learning activities that allow students to experience values rather than merely receive theoretical explanations. One teacher explained:

“The implementation of a fitrah-based curriculum does not emphasize lectures, but experiences. Children learn responsibility, discipline, and cooperation through real activities in nature.” (Teacher, interview, Sept 2025)

Another teacher emphasized the integration of spiritual values in everyday learning activities:

“Every activity is always connected to values of faith. Children are guided to reflect on the greatness of Allah through nature and the events they experience.” (Teacher, interview, Sept 2025)

These statements highlight that implementation focuses on value internalization through lived experiences.

Participant observations reveal that learning activities are conducted through thematic and integrative methods such as spider web and action learning. At Sekolah Alam Bandung, students engaged in outdoor explorations, gardening, and

environmental observations that integrated science, social studies, and moral education. Meanwhile, at Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek, students participated in animal care activities in the mini zoo and collaborative projects in school gardens.

Observations also indicate that teachers act as facilitators who guide reflection and discussion rather than dominate instruction. Students are actively involved in planning activities, solving problems, and evaluating their own learning experiences. This approach fosters independence, responsibility, and cooperation as core character traits.

Document analysis of lesson plans, learning journals, and student activity reports confirms that implementation strategies are systematically documented. Learning activities are designed around thematic units that integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Reflection notes and character observation sheets are used to monitor students' behavioral development alongside academic progress. Table 3 presents a summary of key implementation strategies in fitrah-based curriculum management.

Table 3. Implementation Strategies in Fitrah-Based Curriculum Management

No.	Implementation Aspect	Learning Strategy	Description
1	Learning approach	Experiential learning	Students learn through direct interaction with nature
2	Teaching methods	Spider web and action learning	Integrated thematic and project-based learning
3	Teacher role	Facilitator and mentor	Teachers guide reflection and value internalization
4	Student involvement	Active participation	Students engage in planning, action, and reflection
5	Character integration	Values-based learning	Spiritual, social, and moral values embedded in activities

Source: Interviews, participant observations, and document analysis (2025)

The implementation stage demonstrates that fitrah-based curriculum management emphasizes learning as a holistic and experiential process. By integrating academic content with real-life activities and spiritual reflection, schools create meaningful learning experiences that support character formation. These findings suggest that effective implementation depends not only on innovative teaching methods but also on teachers' ability to consistently model and facilitate character values in everyday practice.

3.4 Evaluation and Supervision of Fitrah-Based Curriculum Management

Evaluation and supervision constitute the final stage of fitrah-based curriculum management and serve as mechanisms for ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of character education. Findings from interviews, participant observations, and document analysis at Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek indicate that evaluation and supervision are conducted holistically, focusing not only on academic outcomes but also on students' character development and behavioral consistency.

Interview data reveal that evaluation in both schools is perceived as a reflective process aimed at improving learning quality and strengthening character formation. A school principal explained:

“Curriculum evaluation does not only look at academic achievement, but also at how children’s character develops in their daily lives whether they become more responsible, independent, and well-mannered.” (Principal, interview, Augus 2025)

A teacher further emphasized the importance of continuous supervision:

“Supervision is carried out continuously through teacher reflection and team discussions. We remind one another to ensure that fitrah values are applied consistently.” (Teacher, interview, August 2025)

These statements suggest that evaluation and supervision are oriented toward continuous improvement rather than judgment.

Participant observations show that teachers routinely observe students’ behavior during learning activities, outdoor exploration, and daily routines. Reflection sessions are conducted at the end of learning activities, allowing students to express experiences, challenges, and moral lessons gained. Teachers also conduct regular meetings to discuss observations, identify challenges, and adjust instructional strategies accordingly.

Observations further indicate that supervision extends beyond classroom activities to include school culture and routines, such as environmental care, worship practices, and social interactions. This comprehensive supervision reinforces consistency in character education.

Document analysis of evaluation reports, student development records, and communication logs with parents confirms that evaluation practices are systematically documented. Schools maintain character development reports that describe students’ progress in areas such as responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and empathy. Documentation also shows regular communication with parents through meetings and written reports to ensure alignment between school and home environments. Table 4 summarizes the evaluation and supervision strategies implemented in fitrah-based curriculum management.

Table 4. Evaluation and Supervision Strategies in Fitrah-Based Curriculum Management

No.	Evaluation Aspect	Evaluation Strategy	Description
1	Student assessment	Character observation	Monitoring daily behavior and value internalization
2	Teacher reflection	Reflective discussions	Teachers evaluate instructional effectiveness collaboratively
3	Supervision scope	Holistic monitoring	Supervision covers learning, routines, and school culture
4	Parental involvement	School–home communication	Regular reports and meetings with parents
5	Follow-up actions	Curriculum adjustment	Evaluation results used to refine curriculum implementation

The evaluation and supervision stage demonstrates that fitrah-based curriculum management emphasizes reflection, consistency, and collaboration. By combining behavioral observation, reflective supervision, and parental involvement, schools ensure that character education is continuously reinforced and aligned across learning environments. These findings suggest that holistic evaluation and supervision are essential for sustaining the effectiveness of fitrah-based curriculum management in shaping students' character.

4 Discussion

This study examined teacher management strategies in integrating technology into This study examined the management of a fitrah-based curriculum in shaping student character at Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek through four core management functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation and supervision. The findings demonstrate that curriculum management grounded in the concept of fitrah provides a coherent and effective framework for holistic character education when implemented systematically and contextually.

The findings show that curriculum planning in both schools is rooted in the philosophical understanding of children's innate potential (fitrah) and Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. This value-oriented planning aligns with educational management theory, which emphasizes planning as a strategic function that determines institutional direction and goals [17]. Unlike conventional curricula that prioritize academic targets, fitrah-based planning integrates spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual dimensions into curriculum objectives.

This finding supports previous studies highlighting the importance of aligning curriculum design with value-based educational goals. However, this study extends the literature by demonstrating that fitrah-based planning is not merely philosophical but operational, as values are explicitly translated into learning objectives, themes, and character indicators. Thus, planning functions as a moral and managerial compass that guides all subsequent curriculum processes.

The organizing stage reveals that both schools strategically utilize natural environments as integral components of the curriculum. This approach reflects contingency theory, which argues that organizational structures must adapt to contextual conditions to achieve effectiveness. By organizing learning around natural spaces such as gardens, fields, and mini zoos schools create learning ecosystems that foster responsibility, cooperation, and environmental awareness.

These findings corroborate research on nature-based education, which emphasizes experiential learning as a powerful medium for character development[27]. The present study adds a managerial dimension by showing that the effectiveness of nature-based learning depends on systematic organization of resources, roles, and schedules. Teachers' collaborative teamwork and parental involvement further strengthen curriculum coherence, indicating that organizing functions as a bridge between values and practice.

The implementation findings demonstrate that fitrah-based curriculum management prioritizes experiential learning through methods such as spider web and action learning. These approaches allow students to internalize values through direct experience rather than abstract instruction. This is consistent with constructivist learning theory, which posits that knowledge and values are constructed through active engagement with the environment[28].

Moreover, the teacher's role as facilitator rather than instructor reflects a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered pedagogy. This finding aligns with [29] perspective that character education is most effective when values are modeled and practiced in authentic contexts. The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating how experiential learning methods are systematically managed within a curriculum framework, ensuring consistency between instructional strategies and character goals.

Evaluation and supervision practices in both schools emphasize reflection, behavioral observation, and continuous improvement. This approach aligns with the controlling function of management, which focuses on monitoring performance and making corrective adjustments. Unlike conventional assessment systems that rely heavily on cognitive measurement, fitrah-based evaluation prioritizes character development indicators such as responsibility, discipline, empathy, and cooperation.

The involvement of parents in evaluation and supervision processes further strengthens character formation by ensuring alignment between school and home environments. This finding supports [30], who emphasizes the importance of family–school collaboration in fitrah-based education. The study contributes new insights by illustrating how evaluation functions not only as an assessment mechanism but also as a reflective managerial tool for sustaining curriculum effectiveness.

Overall, this study fulfills three key theoretical functions. Descriptively, it illustrates how fitrah-based curriculum management operates across planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation stages. Explanatorily, it explains why holistic and value-driven curriculum management effectively shapes student character by aligning philosophy, environment, pedagogy, and supervision. Predictively, the findings suggest that schools adopting systematic fitrah-based curriculum management are more likely to foster balanced student character development in the long term.

Practically, the study highlights that character education cannot be separated from curriculum management processes. Teachers and school leaders must function as curriculum managers who intentionally design, organize, enact, and evaluate learning experiences based on students' innate potential. This research therefore contributes to the advancement of educational management theory and offers an alternative model for schools seeking to implement holistic, character-oriented curricula..

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that fitrah-based curriculum management plays a significant role in shaping students' character when implemented systematically through the core management functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. At Sekolah Alam Bandung and Sekolah Alam Pelopor Rancaekek, curriculum planning is

grounded in fitrah philosophy and Islamic values, organization emphasizes the utilization of natural environments and collaborative human resources, implementation prioritizes experiential and values-based learning, and evaluation focuses on holistic character development supported by continuous supervision and parental involvement. These integrated processes enable schools to foster balanced character traits, including responsibility, independence, cooperation, and moral integrity.

The findings indicate that fitrah-based curriculum management offers a viable alternative to conventional, cognitively oriented educational models by addressing students' spiritual, social, and moral development alongside academic learning. Despite challenges related to consistency between school and home environments, effective collaboration with parents helps sustain character education outcomes. This study contributes theoretically by reinforcing the importance of curriculum management in holistic education and practically by providing a reference model for schools seeking to implement value-based and character-oriented curricula in diverse educational contexts.

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