



Comparative analysis of Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka implementation on character development in physical education

Akhmad Mar'i Muyassar¹

¹Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Kota Bandung, Indonesia

akhmadmari66@gmail.com¹

ABSTRACT

The curriculum not only regulates learning content but also directs all core aspects of education, including learning, teaching, assessment, and the creation of an inclusive and relevant learning environment. This study aims to analyze and compare the implementation of Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka in terms of student character development within physical education. The existing character crisis, marked by issues like a lack of discipline and honesty, underscores the importance of evaluating curriculum effectiveness in fostering positive values. This study employed a quantitative descriptive method, involving a sample of students from public and private schools in Bandung selected through cluster sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from the Youth Sport Value Questionnaire and the Questionnaire of Attitudes in Sport to measure dimensions of values—including moral, competence, and status—and attitudes, which encompass commitment, habits, cheating, and gamesmanship. The results revealed that the majority of students under both curricula fell into the 'moderate' category for character development. Further statistical analysis showed no significant difference between the two curriculum groups. It is concluded that while both curricula have an influence, there is no significant difference in their impact on character development, as their effectiveness tends to be moderate and is heavily influenced by other factors, such as teacher competence and the school environment.

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ABSTRAK

Kurikulum tidak hanya mengatur konten pembelajaran, tetapi juga mengarahkan seluruh aspek inti pendidikan, seperti pembelajaran, pengajaran, penilaian, dan lingkungan belajar yang inklusif dan relevan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan membandingkan implementasi Kurikulum 2013 dengan Kurikulum Merdeka terhadap pengembangan karakter murid dalam pembelajaran pendidikan jasmani. Berangkat dari adanya krisis karakter seperti kurangnya disiplin dan kejujuran, evaluasi efektivitas kurikulum dalam membentuk nilai-nilai positif menjadi sangat penting. Studi ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kuantitatif, melibatkan sejumlah murid dari sekolah negeri dan swasta di Kota Bandung yang dipilih melalui teknik cluster sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur yang diadaptasi dari Youth Sport Value Questionnaire dan Questionnaire of Attitudes in Sport untuk mengukur dimensi nilai meliputi moral, kompetensi, dan status serta sikap, yang mencakup komitmen, kebiasaan, kecurangan, dan permainan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas murid pada kedua kurikulum berada dalam kategori pengembangan karakter "sedang". Analisis statistik lebih lanjut menunjukkan tidak terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan antara kedua kelompok kurikulum tersebut. Disimpulkan bahwa meskipun kedua kurikulum memberikan pengaruh, tidak ada perbedaan signifikan dalam dampaknya terhadap pengembangan karakter, di mana efektivitasnya cenderung moderat dan sangat dipengaruhi oleh faktor lain seperti kompetensi guru dan lingkungan sekolah.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum 2013; Kurikulum Merdeka; pengembangan karakter; pendidikan jasmani; studi komparatif

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country comprising approximately 17,508 islands, spanning 35 provinces, and with a population of more than 238 million, making it the fourth most populous country in the world. The Indonesian Constitution (UUD 1945) mandates the government to provide equal opportunities for all citizens in education through Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which states that "Every citizen has the same right to obtain quality education" (article 5 paragraph 1) (Shaturaev, 2021). "This country, the Republic of Indonesia, does not belong to any group, nor to any religion, nor to any ethnic group, nor to any group with customs and traditions, but the property of all of us from Sabang to Merauke!" - Sukarno, Speech in Bangkok, September 24, 1955 (Shaturaev, 2021). This shows that education plays a fundamental role in maintaining national unity and is the primary means of realizing social justice for all Indonesians.

Education plays an important role in developing quality human resources so that they can compete in the era of globalization (Retnawati *et al.*, 2018). Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, is to develop the potential of students to become people who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible human beings and citizens. In line with national education objectives, a country's education curriculum should provide the best platform for achieving them. In this case, the curriculum not only regulates learning content but also directs all core aspects of education, such as learning, teaching, assessment, and an inclusive and relevant learning environment (Khaira *et al.*, 2023; Kunwar & Adhikari, 2023). Through the curriculum, we can understand the goals, social imagination, and aspirations that a country wants to achieve. The curriculum becomes the foundation for an effective education system that ensures quality learning for all students and prepares active citizens (Irwan *et al.*, 2024; Shaisombat & Wongsaphan, 2025). For the curriculum to be implemented effectively across the education system, flexibility is essential, and a well-designed curriculum framework can achieve this goal (Watagodakumbura, 2017). Therefore, the curriculum should be viewed as a strategic tool for shaping students' character, not merely as an administrative document.

The development of hard skills and soft skills must be integrated throughout the entire educational process, which includes formal, informal, and non-formal learning. The goal is to create a balance between intellectual abilities and the formation of students' character or attitudes (Retnawati *et al.*, 2018). Students with good intellectual abilities but without positive attitudes or character cannot be guaranteed to succeed in facing the developments of the times (Sembiring, 2019). In fact, a learning process that only emphasizes cognitive aspects can create students who are apathetic and less able to interact with their social environment (Retnawati *et al.*, 2018). This emphasizes the importance of developing attitudes and character in the learning process, especially when integrated with the right curriculum, so that it can foster a balance between academic achievement and personal development.

Curriculum change is necessary due to the rapid development of science and technology, which requires the education sector to step beyond the "comfort zone" of the current curriculum. According to Wahyudin in his book "Curriculum Management," the curriculum comprises the objectives, context, and learning strategies that are realized through the development of learning materials, social interaction, and structured learning techniques within educational institutions. The curriculum, as the core of the educational unit, must be continuously evaluated in an innovative, dynamic, and sustainable manner, in line with contemporary developments and advances in science and technology, as well as the competencies desired by the community and by graduates' users (Upu *et al.*, 2025). Thus, the curriculum plays an important role in helping students achieve educational goals in a structured and sustainable manner. Based on this understanding, curriculum management can be defined as efforts to manage the curriculum so that the learning process can run effectively and efficiently, involving feedback and

interrelationships between existing elements (Utomo, 2017). Thus, the curriculum is not only a learning guideline but also a reflection of the demands of modern society. This analysis underscores the need for every curriculum change to be critically evaluated, including in the context of the transition from Kurikulum 2013 to *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

During the 2020-2021 pandemic, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) implemented *Kurikulum 2013* and the Emergency Curriculum (a simplified version of *Kurikulum 2013*) as the curriculum reference for educational units. Then, from 2021 to 2022, Kemendikbudristek's policy was expanded with the option of using *Kurikulum 2013*, Emergency Curriculum, and *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Mobilizing Schools (SP) and Center of Excellence Vocational Schools (PK) based on Kemendikbudristek's guidelines entitled "Curriculum for Learning Recovery." *Kurikulum 2013* is a continuation of the 2006 curriculum, so the components in *Kurikulum 2013* are developments from the previous curriculum, in order to improve the quality of education. In 2005, the government issued Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 concerning national education standards. This regulation was a government initiative to improve the quality of education in Indonesia (Nahdhiah & Suciptaningsih, 2024). The dynamics of the curriculum in Indonesia cannot be separated from socio-economic conditions and the global crisis; therefore, its implementation in learning practices requires continuous review for effectiveness, particularly in shaping student character.

From 2022 to 2024, the Prototype Curriculum will become a competency-based curriculum implemented to restore the learning process affected by the pandemic, with a project-based learning approach (Wiguna & Tristaningrat, 2022). Various problems have arisen with the lack of positive character traits in junior high school students, becoming a growing concern along with an increase in cases of deviant behavior such as bullying, rude behavior, dishonesty, and a lack of responsibility (Arif, 2017). This condition indicates that curriculum change alone does not automatically improve student character, so an empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of *Kurikulum 2013* and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in building character through physical education is needed. Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture's Center for Educational Research and Development reveals that 63% of junior high school students exhibit undisciplined behavior and lack respect for teachers and peers (accessed via <https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2020/03/se-mendikbud-pelaksanaan-kebijakan-pendidikan-dalam-masa-darurat-penyebaran-covid19>). In addition, 47% of junior high school students tend to engage in unethical behavior such as cheating and dishonesty during exams. These data highlight serious problems related to ethics and attitude in the learning process.

In the context of physical education, this problem is also evident. Physical education has great potential to shape students' character through physical activities that foster sportsmanship, teamwork, and healthy competition (Nuraini *et al.*, 2024). However, the lack of implementation of values such as honesty and responsibility is one of the major challenges faced by teachers and the government as curriculum managers. However, the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has sparked debate among teachers and the community, especially parents (Amin & Samad, 2024). Therefore, research on these two curricula is needed to assess the benefits of both and to inform classroom learning assessments. The purpose of this study is to analyze and compare the implementation of *Kurikulum 2013* and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* on character development in physical education learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum Development in Indonesia

The curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, teaching materials, and methods used as guidelines in the learning process to achieve educational goals (Ndari *et al.*, 2023). The curriculum is an important foundation in determining the direction of education because it contains the

vision, mission, and learning strategies that serve to shape students' competencies comprehensively (Aulia *et al.*, 2025; Li, 2022). One of the curricula implemented in Indonesia is *Kurikulum 2013*. This curriculum emphasizes a competency-based approach with an orientation towards shaping students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills through thematic and integrative learning (Saputra & Stiawan, 2024). *Kurikulum 2013* requires teachers not only to act as conveyors of knowledge but also to serve as facilitators in fostering 21st-century character and competencies, such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration.

The government then introduced the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which emphasizes flexibility, differentiation, and independent learning. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* gives schools and teachers the freedom to tailor learning to the needs, characteristics, and potential of students (Lubis, 2025). Its main focus is on strengthening foundational competencies through project-based learning integrated with the values of the Pancasila Student Profile, including faith, piety, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, and critical and creative thinking.

Curriculum development in education also has an important purpose in instilling character values. Character can be understood as a set of traits, values, and habits inherent in an individual and reflected in their mindset, attitudes, and daily behavior (Niemi, 2020). Character education in schools serves to shape students to have moral integrity, social responsibility, and the ability to face life's challenges with noble values (Hanafiah *et al.*, 2024). In this context, physical education plays a strategic role because, through physical activities, sports, and games, students can develop sportsmanship, cooperation, discipline, honesty, and a never-give-up spirit.

Thus, both *Kurikulum 2013* and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* provide space for students' character development, but their approaches differ. *Kurikulum 2013* emphasizes the integration of attitudes across subjects, whereas *Kurikulum Merdeka* highlights contextual and project-based learning experiences. In this regard, physical education is an effective vehicle for supporting character development, because physical activities not only train the body, but also shape students' moral and social values tangibly.

METHODS

This study uses quantitative descriptive research methods to evaluate the relationship between moral values, personal competence, social status, and achievement orientation. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire with a 1-5 Likert scale that was distributed to students as research samples. The questionnaire was designed to generate data for statistical analysis to describe the distribution and interactions among variables. The sampling technique used in this study was cluster sampling. The sample was taken by randomly selecting one public school and one private school in the city of Bandung as representatives of the school population in that area. After the two schools were selected, each school consisted of 15 students. This technique was used to ensure that the sample could represent the variations that exist in the categories of public and private schools in the city of Bandung.

The instruments used in this study were derived from the Youth Sport Value Questionnaire 2 (IVEJ-2) developed by researchers in the Graduate Program in Human Movement Sciences, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (Saldanha *et al.*, 2015), as well as the Questionnaire of Attitudes in Sport (QAS-16), which was adapted from QAS-23, which initially evaluated four dimensions of attitude, including morality and fair play (Lee *et al.*, 2008). The instrument was adapted to the *Kurikulum 2013* and the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. These instruments were used to measure values in the context of school sports, consisting of four dimensions: 1) moral values, including aspects of fairness, honesty, and sportsmanship; 2) competency values, including effort, ability, and skill; 3) status values, which are related to social recognition from peers; and 4) achievement orientation, which is related to the motivation to achieve

success. In this study, both instruments were adapted to the context of implementing Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka, so that each questionnaire item measured not only values in sports activities but also their relevance to physical education instruction in schools. The researchers moved the details of the instrument items to the appendix, so that this section of the methodology only describes the concept, dimensions, and implementation of the instruments in the study.

This study employs a survey method and data collection using a statement questionnaire. Sugiyono, in his book "Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods and Research & Development," defines a questionnaire as a data collection method used to elicit responses from respondents through a series of written questions or statements. The learning motivation questionnaire used in this study was adapted from [Saldanha et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Lee et al. \(2008\)](#). The calculation of an individual's character development score is categorized by the formula in **Table 1** below:

Table 1. Category/Formula

Interval	Formula		
Very Low	$X < M - 1,5 \text{ SD}$		
Low	$M - 1,5 \text{ SD} < X < M - 0,5 \text{ SD}$		
Medium	$M - 0,5 \text{ SD} < X < M + 0,5 \text{ SD}$		
High	$M + 0,5 \text{ SD} < X < M + 1,5 \text{ SD}$		
Very High	$M + 1,5 \text{ SD} < X$		

Calculation Results			
Very Low	62,17	< X	
Low	62,17	< X <	69,43
Medium	69,43	< X <	83,97
High	83,97	< X <	91,24
Very High	91,24	> X	

Source: Research 2025

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Implementation of *Kurikulum 2013* on Character Development in Physical Education

Table 2. Character development gains based on gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	18	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Female	12	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Research 2025

Based on the results of the study in **Table 2**, there is an explanation of character development based on gender. There were 18 male students with a percentage of 60% and 12 female students with a percentage of 40%. So, the total number of subjects in this study was 30 students.

Table 3. Character development gains based on age

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	15	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	16	16	53.3	53.3	96.7
	17	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Research 2025

Based on the calculations in **Table 3**, the students have various ages. There are 13 students aged 15, 16 students aged 16, and 17 students aged 17.

Table 4. Character development category achievement through Kurikulum 2013

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Very Low	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Low	6	20.0	20.0	23.3
	Medium	17	56.7	56.7	80.0
	High	3	10.0	10.0	90.0
	Very High	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Research 2025

Based on the results in **Table 4**, the frequency distributions for several categories indicate the results of the analysis of the influence of Kurikulum 2013 on character development in physical education, with sub-variables of Values (moral values, competence, and status) and Attitudes (commitment, habits, cheating, and play). 3 students achieved a very high category, with a percentage of 10%. 3 students achieved the high category, with a percentage of 10%. 17 students achieved the medium category, with a percentage of 56.7%. There were 6 students who obtained the low category with a percentage of 20%, and 1 student obtained the very low category with a percentage of 3.3%.

Overview of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum on Character Development in Physical Education

Table 5. Character development achievements based on age

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	15	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	16	16	53.3	53.3	96.7
	17	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Research 2025

Based on the calculations in **Table 5**, the students have different ages. There are 13 students aged 15, 16 students aged 16, and 17 students aged 17.

Table 6. Results of character development categories through the Independent Curriculum

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	15	13	43.3	43.3
	16	16	53.3	96.7
	17	1	3.3	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Research 2025

Based on the results in **Table 6**, several categories present the results of the analysis of the influence of the Kurikulum Merdeka on character development in physical education, with sub-variables of Values (moral values, competence, and status) and Attitudes (commitment, habits, cheating, and play). There are 3 students in the very high category with a percentage of 10%. There are 5 students in the high category with a percentage of 16.7%. There are 14 students in the medium category with a percentage of 46.7%. There are 6 students in the low category with a percentage of 20%, and 2 students in the very low category with a percentage of 6.7%.

Overview of the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum on Character Development in Physical Education

Table 7. Comparison of Character Development Through Curriculum

<i>Independent Samples Test</i>						
		<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>		
		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Character Development	<i>Kurikulum 2013</i>	,053	,819	,932	58	,355
	<i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i>			,932	57,848	,355

Source: Research 2025

Based on **Table 7**, the sig. (2-tailed) value for *Kurikulum 2013* is 0.355 and the sig. (2-tailed) the value for *Kurikulum Merdeka* is 0.355, and both values are greater than 0.05 ($0.355 > 0.005$). This indicates that there is no significant difference between students learning with *Kurikulum 2013* and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in terms of character development through physical education. Another calculation based on the t-value is 0.932. Considering the degree of freedom in this study, which is 28 obtained from $N-2$, the degree of freedom (df) at the 5% level is 2.048, which means that the t-value is smaller than the t-table value, with a value of $0.937 < 2.048$. Therefore, the results indicate no significant difference between students learning under *Kurikulum 2013* and those learning under *Kurikulum Merdeka* in terms of character development through physical education.

Discussion

The study results indicate that the majority of students fall within the moderate category for character development under the Kurikulum 2013, accounting for 56.7%. The least populated category is very low, with only 3.3% of students. And the majority of students are in the moderate category in terms of character development through the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, with a percentage of 46.7%. The least populated category was very low, with only 6.7% of students. It appears that the curriculum influences character development, but its impact is not substantial and some aspects remain underdeveloped. There is no difference between *Kurikulum 2013* and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in terms of character development. However, in both curricula, there are still students in the low to very low categories. These findings confirm that although the curriculum has been designed to integrate character values, its effectiveness is still at a moderate level.

From the perspective of values (morals, competence, and status) and attitudes (commitment, habits, sportsmanship, and behavior in the game), character development in students tends to be formed through physical learning activities that emphasize teamwork, compliance with game rules, and honesty when competing. For example, sportsmanship can be seen in how students accept victory and defeat, while honesty can be reflected in following the rules of the game without cheating (Wae et al., 2024). However, data show that the internalization of these values is not yet evenly distributed among students. These results are in line with research showing that physical education teachers' understanding of implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in PJOK subjects at the high school/vocational school/Islamic high school level is greatly influenced by the teachers' level of understanding, which has implications for the quality of student character development (Huzein et al., 2023).

The *Kurikulum Merdeka*-based Physical Education, Health, and Sports (PJOK) with the implementation of project-based learning that supports the strengthening of new character traits is currently in the adjustment phase, where teachers' pedagogical competencies and innovative methods have not yet been fully mastered (Wae et al., 2024). Thus, although *Kurikulum 2013* and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* offer different approaches, the former being integrative through each subject and the latter being more flexible and project-centered, the effectiveness of student character development is still influenced by teachers' understanding and readiness as well as the school environment context, reflecting the similarity with the findings that both curricula provide comparable results in supporting student character development.

The implementation of the curriculum influences student character development, both *Kurikulum 2013* and the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Both curricula are designed to integrate character values into learning. In the context of physical education, character development, such as values and attitudes, with the curriculum has a role in supporting these values, and the integration of character values in the curriculum enhances students' positive attitudes at school (Anisah, 2023). The implementation of the curriculum is inseparable from teachers' understanding of the curriculum, which also contributes to the effectiveness of character development. Teachers who are skilled in implementing the curriculum tend to be better able to inspire and motivate students, so that character values can be internalized more effectively (Caena & Redecker, 2019).

Character development is related to the school environment itself, so a positive and supportive school environment will influence the development of students' character (Armini, 2024; Kuswadi, 2019). Thus, character development through the implementation of *Kurikulum 2013* and *Kurikulum Merdeka* does not depend solely on the curriculum itself, but also on teacher competence and the learning environment. This underscores the importance of collaboration among all elements of education to achieve better character-development goals. The implementation of a new curriculum does not always produce significant differences in certain aspects, such as character development, especially when the curriculum maintains

the same objectives for strengthening character values. Although *Kurikulum 2013* and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* have different approaches, both provide comparable results in supporting student character development (Wulandari & Mustofa, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the implementation of *Kurikulum 2013* and *Kurikulum Merdeka* affects student character development, although the difference is not statistically significant. This confirms that other factors, such as teacher understanding and the school environment, also play an important role in the effectiveness of character development. Therefore, it is important to improve teacher competence and create a supportive learning environment. Recommendations for future researchers include conducting more in-depth research on the factors that influence character development and how different teaching methods affect these outcomes, as well as considering students' perspectives in curriculum evaluation. Conducting longitudinal research to evaluate the long-term impact of both curricula on student character development is also recommended.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article. The author confirms that the article's data and content are free of plagiarism.

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ATTACHMENT

Research Instrument

Item	Value	Loading
Moral Values	<p>I try to be fair in accordance with the curriculum.</p> <p>I demonstrate good sportsmanship in accordance with the curriculum.</p> <p>I help others when they need it, in accordance with the curriculum.</p>	
Competencies	<p>I set my own goals in accordance with the applicable curriculum.</p> <p>I use my skills well, in accordance with the existing curriculum.</p> <p>I have become a better player in accordance with the implemented curriculum.</p>	
Status	<p>I am a leader in the group, in accordance with the applicable curriculum.</p> <p>I demonstrate that I am better than others, in accordance with the implemented curriculum.</p> <p>I present myself well, in accordance with the existing curriculum.</p>	
Attitude		
Commitment	<p>I attend every training session in accordance with the curriculum.</p> <p>I always try my best in accordance with the applicable curriculum.</p> <p>I don't give up after making mistakes in accordance with the existing curriculum.</p>	
Habit	<p>I shake hands with my opponent, whether I win or lose, in accordance with the curriculum.</p> <p>I congratulate my opponent on a good game or performance, in accordance with the applicable curriculum.</p> <p>I congratulate my opponent after I lose, in accordance with the existing curriculum.</p>	
Fraudulent	<p>I will cheat if I think it will help me win, in accordance with the curriculum that is being implemented.</p> <p>I cheat if I can get away with it, in accordance with the applicable curriculum.</p> <p>Sometimes I have to cheat in accordance with the existing curriculum.</p>	
Games	<p>It's a good idea to annoy your opponents in accordance with the curriculum.</p> <p>I sometimes try to disrupt my opponents in accordance with the curriculum.</p> <p>If I don't want others to do well, I delay them a little in accordance with the curriculum.</p>	