Students' perceptions and lecturers' practices as the basis for redesigning Mandatory Curriculum Courses (MKWK) based on OBE and SDGs

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Article Info

Abstract

The Compulsory Curriculum Courses (MKWK) play a strategic role in shaping graduates with Pancasila character. However, their implementation in higher education institutions still faces challenges related to relevance, teaching methods, and the integration of sustainability values. This study aims to analyze students' perceptions and lecturers' practices as the basis for redesigning the MKWK curriculum based on Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework. A mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design was employed. The quantitative phase involved a survey using a Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 204 students from various study programs at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tasikmalaya. The qualitative phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with MKWK lecturers and selected students to explore and deepen the survey findings. The results revealed that students hold positive perceptions regarding the meaningfulness of MKWK values but rated low on innovation and diversity of teaching methods. In-depth interviews indicated the need for better alignment between learning outcomes (CPL), course learning outcomes (CPMK), and learning strategies that are more reflective and contextual. These findings provide a conceptual foundation for developing a new integrative MKWK syllabus based on OBE and SDGs, aimed at strengthening Pancasila character and 21st-century competencies among students.

Keywords: curriculum, OBE, MKWK, SDGs,

INTRODUCTION

Higher education holds a strategic responsibility in preparing graduates who are not only academically excellent but also embody the values of *Pancasila*, possess global competitiveness, and are oriented toward sustainable development. The Mandatory Curriculum Courses (MKWK)—which include Religious Education, Pancasila Education, Civic Education, and Indonesian Language—serve as the main vehicle for instilling national, moral, and universal human values within universities (Mustari & Hashfi, 2024). However, in practice, the implementation of MKWK often remains normative, cognitive, and insufficient in fostering students' reflective awareness. As a result, MKWK learning has not yet fully addressed the

challenges of the 21st century, which demand critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and adaptive character (Zulfadhli et al., 2023).

The current transformation of higher education is marked by the paradigm of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), which emphasizes learning outcomes as the primary orientation of the teaching and learning process. This approach requires each course to be clearly designed in terms of learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and assessment methods (Ghazali et al., 2024). OBE not only focuses on competency achievement but also on the relevance of those competencies to broader social and environmental needs. Meanwhile, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global framework that integrates sustainability values into education, including social justice, ecological responsibility, and human well-being (Hák et al., 2016). The integration of OBE and SDGs is believed to foster a holistic and future-oriented curriculum.

However, this ideal condition has not been fully reflected in the implementation of MKWK across Indonesian universities. Previous studies indicate that most MKWK lecturers still rely on lecture-based approaches and have not yet fully grasped the structure of learning outcomes within the OBE framework (Karyati et al., 2023). On the other hand, students often perceive MKWK merely as a compulsory academic burden rather than a space for value and character actualization (Permana, 2024). This gap reveals a discrepancy between *das sollen* (the ideal expectations of value-based character education) and *das sein* (the actual reality of learning implementation). Therefore, empirical studies are needed to bridge the gap between ideal concepts and actual practices.

Most previous studies have focused on MKWK curriculum reconstruction at the policy or macro-design level (Kurniadi et al., 2025). However, research that directly explores students' perceptions and lecturers' practices as the empirical foundation for curriculum redesign remains limited. Understanding these two perspectives is essential for identifying the root causes of current challenges and for formulating more relevant learning models that align with students' needs. In addition, national surveys reveal that MKWK implementation tends to be fragmented across lecturers and lacks a clear integration map between Institutional Learning Outcomes (CPL), Course Learning Outcomes (CPMK), and character values (Gaitán-Aguilar et al., 2024). This condition reinforces the urgency of adopting a reflective–collaborative approach in restructuring the MKWK curriculum.

Another critical issue lies in the weak integration of sustainability values within MKWK learning. Many curricula still emphasize cognitive and moral domains without cultivating global awareness and social responsibility as mandated by the SDGs. This highlights the need to transform MKWK into a more project-based, reflective, and contextual learning experience connected to students' real-life situations. Through an integrative approach grounded in OBE and SDGs, MKWK can be reoriented to develop graduates who not only embody *Pancasila* values but also possess global sustainability competencies.

Based on the above discussion, two main problems can be identified in the current MKWK context in higher education. First, there is no comprehensive mapping of students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness and meaningfulness of MKWK values. Second, lecturers' teaching practices in implementing MKWK remain varied and are not yet fully based

on OBE principles. These two issues indicate the need for an empirical approach to obtain factual insights that can serve as the foundation for curriculum improvement.

As a solution, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach that combines the strengths of quantitative and qualitative data. The research stages include student perception surveys, in-depth interviews with lecturers and students, and collaborative focus group discussions (FGDs) with MKWK lecturers. Through this reflective–collaborative approach, the study aims to produce a conceptual model that integrates CPL, CPMK, and *Pancasila* character values into a new syllabus design based on OBE and SDGs.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze students' perceptions and lecturers' practices in the implementation of MKWK and to use these insights as a conceptual foundation for redesigning a more integrative and contextual MKWK curriculum. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for universities in strengthening the role of MKWK as a means to foster student character formation, global competence, and sustainability awareness in the era of higher education transformation.

Unlike prior MKWK–OBE studies that primarily confirm misalignment between learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and assessment, this study contributes by proposing a structured analytical approach to evaluate MKWK implementation within the OBE framework. The study also offers empirical insights that link MKWK reform to national higher education policy directions, thereby extending MKWK–OBE research from diagnostic analysis toward policy-relevant curriculum improvement.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach using a sequential explanatory model, in which the research began with the collection of quantitative data to obtain a general overview of the phenomenon, followed by qualitative data to deepen and explain the quantitative findings (Pregoner, 2024; Takona, 2024). This approach was chosen because the purpose of the study was not only to measure students' perceptions of the effectiveness and meaningfulness of MKWK learning but also to gain a deeper understanding of lecturers' practices and the contextual realities of implementation in the field. This combinative approach allows for the integration of numerical and narrative data to produce more comprehensive curriculum recommendations.

The first phase involved the collection of quantitative data through a student perception survey. The instrument used was a closed-ended questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The instrument was developed based on dimensions of learning effectiveness, the meaningfulness of MKWK values, relevance to students' lives, and innovation in teaching methods. The content validity of the instrument was examined through expert judgment by two specialists in curriculum and character education, while its reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.86, indicating good internal consistency. The survey was administered online via an electronic form to 204 students from eight study programs at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tasikmalaya, all of whom had completed at least two MKWK courses. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, taking into account variations in study programs and student cohorts to ensure data representativeness.

The second phase consisted of collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with MKWK lecturers and selected students based on the survey results. The selection of interview participants followed a purposeful sampling strategy, focusing on respondents who represented varying perceptions of MKWK learning effectiveness. The number of interview participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, whereby interviews were conducted iteratively until no new themes or substantive information emerged. Data saturation was reached when subsequent interviews yielded repetitive patterns and confirmed previously identified categories.

The interviews were conducted to explore the quantitative findings further, particularly those indicating areas of MKWK learning that were perceived as less effective or less meaningful. The interview guide covered themes related to teaching strategies, learning outcome assessment, character value integration, and challenges faced by lecturers in applying OBE and SDG principles. In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted limited classroom observations of MKWK sessions to directly observe lecturers' methods and classroom interactions. In this context, the researcher acted as a passive participant observer, without influencing the teaching process.

The third phase involved conducting a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with MKWK lecturers to discuss the survey and interview findings and to collaboratively design the initial draft of the redesigned syllabus. The FGD adopted a reflective–collaborative design approach, in which each lecturer was encouraged to identify learning outcomes, teaching strategies, and value integrations aligned with OBE and SDG principles. One of the resource persons, Melsa Sagita Imaniar, M.Keb, an expert in OBE training, participated in providing technical input on the formulation of program and course learning outcomes (CPL and CPMK). This stage served as the foundation for developing the integrated MKWK syllabus draft, which would later undergo validation in the final phase of the study.

The research was conducted over six months (May–October 2025) at Universitas Muhammadiyah Tasikmalaya. The site was chosen because the university is currently undertaking an initiative to review its MKWK curriculum based on the OBE–SDGs framework, making it a relevant context for applying the research findings. The researcher was directly involved in all qualitative data collection activities and actively facilitated the FGD sessions with MKWK teaching staff.

Data analysis was carried out in a tiered and integrative manner. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine frequency distributions, mean values, and percentages for each student perception indicator. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, involving transcription, open coding, categorization, and identification of key themes. The validity of qualitative data was ensured through triangulation of sources (lecturers and students), triangulation of methods (survey, interviews, and FGD), and member checking to confirm the accuracy of interpretations with participants.

Finally, the results from both data sets were integrated during the interpretation merging stage by comparing the survey and interview findings to identify patterns linking student perceptions, lecturer practices, and curriculum redesign needs. This process produced an empirically grounded depiction of the current situation, serving as the basis for developing a

conceptual model and the initial draft of an OBE–SDGs–based MKWK syllabus, which constitutes the main output of this study.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Results of the Student Perception Survey on MKWK Learning
Survey involving 204 students from eight study programs provided a general overview of students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness, meaningfulness, and relevance of MKWK learning. Descriptive analysis revealed that the majority of students hold a positive view toward the values embedded in MKWK, recognizing its importance in shaping moral and civic character. However, the findings also indicate a lack of innovation in teaching methods and learning media, suggesting that MKWK learning activities remain largely conventional and have yet to fully engage students in active, reflective, and contextual learning experiences.

Table 1. Student Perceptions of MKWK Learning

No	Assessment Aspect	Mean Score	Category
1	Meaningfulness of Pancasila values and national character	4.32	Very Good
2	Relevance of MKWK material to daily life	4.10	Good
3	Student engagement in the learning process	3.95	Good
4	Variety and innovation of teaching methods	3.46	Fair
5	Use of learning media and technology	3.52	Fair
6	Integration between theory and practice	3.70	Good

In Table 1, the overall mean score indicates a "Good" category (mean = 3.84). However, two aspects received relatively lower ratings—innovation in teaching methods (3.46) and use of learning media (3.52). This finding suggests that although the fundamental values of MKWK are well accepted by students, the learning process remains largely conventional and has not yet fully promoted active learning experiences. To provide a clearer picture of students' perceptions across various aspects of MKWK learning, the following bar chart illustrates the average scores for each assessment indicator.
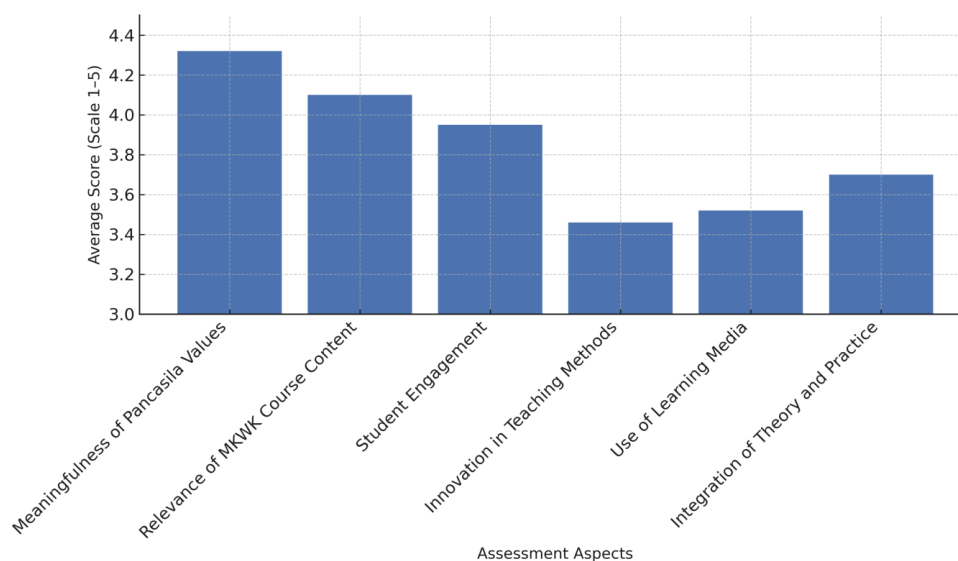

Figure 1. Students' Perceptions of MKWK Learning

Figure 1 shows that the aspect of *meaningfulness of Pancasila values* obtained the highest score (4.32), while *innovation in learning methods* received the lowest score (3.46). This finding indicates a gap between students' understanding of Pancasila values and the application of innovative learning strategies. Therefore, these results form a crucial basis for the *redesign of the MKWK curriculum* to make it more adaptive, contextual, and relevant to the needs of today's students.

Findings from Lecturer and Student Interviews

In-depth interviews with six MKWK lecturers and eight students produced three main themes that reinforce the quantitative survey results. These themes reflect the real dynamics of the MKWK learning process in practice and serve as a reflective foundation for *curriculum redesign*, ensuring that MKWK learning not only instills values but also fosters students' critical thinking and participatory abilities.

Table 2. Thematic Results of Interviews with Lecturers and Students

Main Theme	Description of Findings	Example of Respondent Statements
Uneven Understanding of OBE	Some lecturers still perceive OBE merely as the formulation of learning outcomes (CPL) without fully understanding outcome-based teaching strategies.	"We know the term OBE, but in practice we still teach as usual because there are no clear guidelines." (Lecturer 3)
Passive Student Engagement	Students are rarely actively involved in discussions or value-based projects; learning tends to be one-way.	"Sometimes we just listen. The assignments are mostly written tasks, not direct experiences." (Student 5)
Disconnection between CPL, CPMK, and Character Values	Learning plans have not yet linked learning outcomes with SDG values and the Pancasila Student Profile.	"It's difficult for us to assess how far students apply character values in real contexts." (Lecturer 2)

From the interview results, it can be concluded that the main challenges in MKWK (General Compulsory Courses) learning lie in the pedagogical aspect and curriculum design. Lecturers require more practical guidelines to implement the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), while students need more contextual learning approaches so that MKWK values can be genuinely internalized. In addition, there is a growing need to align the components of Learning Outcomes (CPL), Course Learning Outcomes (CPMK), and character values within a coherent structure, enabling lecturers to design learning that is more directed toward developing graduates with Pancasila-based character.

Results of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Curriculum Redesign

The FGD phase was conducted to reflectively review the findings of the survey and interviews. The participants consisted of eight MKWK lecturers and one expert in OBE-based curriculum design. The discussion reached a consensus that the redesign of the MKWK curriculum should be directed toward an integrative and collaborative model, connecting learning outcomes with students' life contexts and sustainability values.

Key points from the FGD include:

1. The integration of OBE and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be realized through the formulation of CPL and CPMK that are interrelated across MKWK courses.
2. Learning strategies need to shift from lectures and essay-based assignments toward project-based learning, case studies, and value reflection methods.
3. Learning assessment should consider aspects of attitude, social participation, and students' personal reflection on Pancasila character values.
4. Collaboration among MKWK lecturers needs to be strengthened so that each course does not operate in isolation, but instead contributes to an integrated ecosystem of value-based learning.

The results of the FGD were compiled into an initial draft of an integrative MKWK syllabus, containing a structure that aligns CPL–CPMK–Values–Learning Strategies. This draft will serve as validation material for the next stage of research.

The redesigned MKWK syllabus is conceptually structured based on the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The structure begins with clearly defined program learning outcomes and MKWK learning outcomes, which are then mapped to OBE indicators and relevant SDG targets. These outcomes inform the selection of learning materials, student-centered teaching strategies, and authentic assessment methods. Character education values are embedded across learning activities and assessment tasks, ensuring alignment between cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learning.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Based on both quantitative and qualitative results, it can be concluded that students perceive MKWK as meaningful for character formation; however, its implementation has not yet been innovative and has not fully adopted OBE and SDG principles. Lecturers acknowledge the need to align learning objectives with teaching practices so that Pancasila values can be contextualized and brought to life in the learning process.

These findings reinforce the importance of redesigning the MKWK curriculum—not merely by revising academic documents but by transforming the lecturers' pedagogical paradigm. The results form the conceptual foundation for developing a new OBE- and SDG-based MKWK syllabus, aimed at strengthening the integration of character and sustainability values within higher education.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that students have a positive perception of the meaningfulness of the values embedded in the MKWK courses; however, they rated low the aspects of innovation in teaching methods and the use of digital media. These findings address the research question by indicating that the effectiveness and meaningfulness of MKWK have not been fully accompanied by pedagogical innovations relevant to the needs of today's students. This aligns with the findings of Gumilar et al. (2025), who stated that MKWK implementation in many universities remains knowledge-transfer oriented and has not yet evolved toward character formation and reflective capacity building.

Lecturers' difficulties in implementing OBE-based assessment can be understood as a consequence of both structural and cultural factors. Structurally, lecturers face increased

administrative demands related to outcome mapping and documentation, which are not always accompanied by adequate institutional support or continuous professional development. Culturally, long-established teacher-centered pedagogical practices tend to persist, making the transition toward student-centered and outcome-oriented learning challenging. These findings align with previous studies indicating that OBE implementation often requires not only technical training but also a shift in academic culture.

The discrepancy between students' positive perception of values and their low rating of teaching methods reveals a gap between curriculum design and its practical implementation. Students understand the importance of Pancasila, nationalism, and morality values but have not yet experienced learning processes that enable deep internalization of those values. This situation illustrates the distance between *das sollen* (the ideal of value-based character education) and *das sein* (the reality of classroom practice). A similar situation was reported by Kurniawaty (2023), who found that MKWK learning remains dominated by lectures and lacks reflective activities.

These findings reinforce the argument that MKWK curriculum design needs to shift from a cognitive paradigm toward a transformative paradigm, positioning students as active subjects in the process of value internalization (Mustari & Hashfi, 2024). Through the Outcome-Based Education **(OBE)** approach, each course can be systematically designed based on specific, measurable, and outcome-oriented learning achievements. The OBE principle requires alignment between graduate learning outcomes (CPL), course learning outcomes (CPMK), learning strategies, and assessment methods. However, interview results indicate that most MKWK lecturers still perceive OBE merely as an administrative document without practical implementation guidelines. This suggests that training and mentoring for lecturers are crucial elements for successful OBE application at the course level.

The passive engagement of students in MKWK learning also indicates the need for more contextual and experiential approaches. Project-based learning and service-learning models can serve as relevant alternatives to foster active participation and social awareness among students (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Through project-based learning, students not only understand value concepts but also apply them in real-life contexts. This approach aligns with the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework (Leicht & Heiss, 2018), which emphasizes reflective, participatory, and behavior-changing learning.

Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the MKWK curriculum provides an opportunity to expand the Pancasila value perspective toward global awareness. Values such as mutual cooperation, social justice, and humanity can be connected to SDG goals like gender equality, peace, and environmental responsibility (Nur et al., 2022). The FGD findings that emphasized the importance of lecturer collaboration reinforce Karyati et al. (2023), who argue that value education becomes more effective when implemented across disciplines and integrated among courses. Thus, an OBE–SDGs-based redesign of MKWK should address not only the content dimension but also structural and methodological aspects.

In practice, MKWK lecturers face challenges in connecting CPL and CPMK with character assessment indicators. The FGD results reveal that most lecturers still struggle to develop valid and measurable affective assessment indicators. This is consistent who found that MKWK assessments tend to focus primarily on cognitive aspects. Therefore, strengthening

lecturers' capacity in designing character-based assessments should be prioritized to ensure that OBE principles are truly realized in learning practices (Bitar & Davidovich, 2024).

Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of building a collaborative learning culture among MKWK lecturers. Lecturers need reflective forums to share experiences and best practices in integrating Pancasila and SDG values into teaching. According to Widiastuti et al., (2024), character education is more effective when managed within academic communities that foster exemplary behavior, collaboration, and reflective dialogue between lecturers and students. In this study, the involvement of an expert in OBE-based curriculum design enriched lecturers' reflection processes, resulting in a more outcome-oriented draft syllabus.

Empirically, these findings expand the understanding of how MKWK learning can contribute to student character development amid higher education transformation. MKWK designed under OBE and SDG principles can serve as a medium for strengthening the Pancasila-Character Graduate Profile, as mandated in Ministerial Regulation No. 53 of 2023 on Higher Education Quality Assurance. This research also provides a foundation for developing a more integrative and evidence-based MKWK curriculum model.

Theoretically, the study modifies existing character education curriculum models—from a normative character model to a transformative character curriculum model. This model positions the values of Pancasila and SDGs not merely as instructional content but as measurable learning outcomes, achieved through real-life learning experiences and reflective student activities. Hence, MKWK learning can function not only to internalize values but also to actualize them in concrete social actions.

Practically, this research highlights the importance of reformulating the MKWK syllabus using a reflective-collaborative approach. The FGD results show that lecturers should be engaged as collaborative partners, not merely as curriculum implementers. Such engagement strengthens lecturers' sense of ownership and responsibility toward the institutional implementation of OBE–SDGs. Additionally, these findings provide a basis for developing lecturer training modules focused on formulating CPL, CPMK, and project-based character assessments.

In conclusion, this discussion demonstrates that an OBE–SDGs-based redesign of MKWK is a strategic step to strengthen the integration of Pancasila character, global competence, and sustainability awareness. This research not only bridges the gap between theory and practice but also provides new directions for developing a national curriculum oriented toward cultivating Indonesian graduates who are excellent, adaptive, and strong in character.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the redesign of General Compulsory Courses (MKWK) should be directed toward strengthening learning that is Outcome-Based Education (OBE)-oriented and integrates the values of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Students' high perception of the meaningfulness of Pancasila values and the relevance of course content indicates the strong potential of MKWK in shaping students' integrity and character. However, weaknesses remain in the aspects of pedagogical innovation and the use of learning media. Therefore,

curriculum reformulation is needed to bridge the gap between the ideal values and the realities of implementation.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within a limited institutional context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other higher education settings. Second, although the mixed-methods approach provided rich insights, the qualitative data were based on a limited number of interview participants, which may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives across all MKWK lecturers and students. Third, the classroom observations were conducted on a limited scale, focusing on selected sessions, and therefore may not reflect the full range of instructional practices. Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into MKWK–OBE implementation and offers a foundation for future research.

The findings also emphasize the importance of lecturer collaboration in implementing OBE contextually and the need for systematic training on the design of Course Learning Outcomes (CPMK) and character-based assessment. The reflective–collaborative approach adopted through the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) proved effective in producing a more applicable syllabus design aligned with students' needs and the direction of national higher education policy.

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