



## Integrating Local Wisdom into Elementary School Learning: A Strategy for Strengthening Students' Cultural Identity and Character

Hendi Murtadoilah<sup>1\*</sup>, Femi Dian Pitasari<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1-2</sup>Universitas Sindang Kasih Majalengka, Indonesia

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This study aims to analyze the integration of local wisdom in the learning process at elementary schools as a strategy to strengthen students' cultural identity and character. This research used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The research subjects consisted of teachers and students at an elementary school implementing local wisdom-based learning. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed using interactive analysis techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the integration of local wisdom in learning can be implemented through the development of learning materials containing local cultural values, the use of contextual learning methods, and the involvement of the surrounding community in the educational process. This integration can enhance students' understanding of local culture, foster pride in cultural identity, and strengthen character values such as cooperation, responsibility, and mutual respect. Therefore, the implementation of local wisdom-based learning needs to be continuously developed as part of educational innovation relevant to the social and cultural context of society.

**Keywords:** local wisdom; contextual learning; cultural identity; elementary education

Corresponding Author:

**Hendi Murtadoilah**

Universitas Sindang Kasih Majalengka

Email: [hendy.diee@gmail.com](mailto:hendy.diee@gmail.com)



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### INTRODUCTION

Globalization has brought significant changes to society, including in the fields of education and culture. The rapid flow of information, technology, and global culture increasingly influences the mindset and behavior of the younger generation. On one hand, globalization provides opportunities for the advancement of science and technology; on the other hand, it poses challenges to the sustainability of local cultural values. The younger generation tends to be more familiar with global popular culture than with their own local traditions, which may lead to a gradual erosion of local cultural identity. In this context, education plays a strategic role in preserving and transmitting cultural values that constitute a society's identity (Chaer et al., 2021). Education not only serves as a medium for knowledge transfer but also as a vehicle for transmitting cultural values, social norms, and local wisdom embedded within the community.

One relevant approach to addressing these challenges is education based on local wisdom. Local wisdom refers to knowledge, values, and cultural practices that develop within a community and are passed down from generation to generation. The integration of local wisdom into education helps students understand the social and cultural context in which they live, making learning more contextual and meaningful. This approach also contributes to fostering cultural awareness, enhancing students' pride in their local identity, and promoting mutual

respect in a diverse society. Previous studies indicate that learning integrated with local culture can strengthen students' cultural identity while also fostering character values such as cooperation, responsibility, and tolerance (Niman, 2025; Parwati et al., 2025).

Elementary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and cultural identity. At this developmental stage, children are in the process of forming values, attitudes, and behaviors that will influence their future development. Therefore, the learning process in elementary schools should not only focus on academic achievement but also emphasize the internalization of cultural values and character building. Through learning activities that incorporate local cultural elements, students can become familiar with traditions, language, arts, and social values that are part of their community. The integration of local cultural values into learning also enhances student engagement, as the content is closely related to their everyday experiences.

However, current classroom practices at the elementary level still face several challenges. One of the main issues is that learning tends to be abstract and lacks contextual relevance to students' real-life experiences. Learning materials are often delivered theoretically without connecting them to the social and cultural realities surrounding students. As a result, students may struggle to understand the relevance of the content to their daily lives. In addition, the utilization of local culture as a learning resource remains limited. Many schools have not optimally integrated local cultural potential into the learning process, despite the richness of the surrounding social and cultural environment as a meaningful contextual resource.

Previous studies have explored the importance of integrating local culture into education through ethnopedagogical approaches and local wisdom-based learning. Ethnopedagogy is an educational approach that positions local culture as both a learning resource and the primary context of instruction. Through this approach, cultural values embedded within society can be integrated into teaching and learning activities, enabling students to acquire not only academic knowledge but also an understanding of the cultural values that shape their identity. Research shows that the application of ethnopedagogy in learning can enhance student engagement and strengthen their understanding of local cultural values (Putri et al., 2024; Talita & Saputra, 2025).

Furthermore, several studies highlight the effectiveness of local wisdom-based learning in developing students' character. Learning that incorporates folklore, traditional games, and local cultural practices has been shown to foster positive moral values among students. For instance, research on the use of folklore within an ethnopedagogical approach indicates that integrating local culture into learning can improve students' understanding of values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for cultural heritage (Allo et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of research emphasizing the importance of culture-based education, the implementation of local wisdom integration in elementary school learning still faces various limitations. Many studies focus on conceptual aspects or implementation within specific subjects, while comprehensive analyses of strategies for integrating local wisdom across the learning process remain limited. In addition, few studies specifically examine how local wisdom integration can function as a strategy to strengthen cultural identity while simultaneously fostering students' character within the context of elementary education.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze the integration of local wisdom in elementary school learning and to identify strategies that can be used to strengthen students' cultural identity and character through contextual and culturally based learning processes.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to gain an in-depth understanding of the integration of local wisdom in elementary school learning. The qualitative approach was used to describe the phenomenon of culture-based learning in a contextual manner,

based on the experiences and perspectives of the research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted in an elementary school that implements local culture-based learning. The research site was selected using purposive sampling, considering the presence of instructional practices that incorporate local wisdom values into teaching and learning activities.

The research participants consisted of classroom teachers, students, and the school principal who were directly involved in the learning process. Data were collected using several techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly examine classroom activities and the integration of local cultural values in the teaching and learning process. Interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and the school principal to obtain information regarding strategies and experiences in implementing local wisdom-based learning. Meanwhile, documentation was used to complement the data through various sources such as lesson plans, activity photographs, and school documents related to the implementation of local wisdom-based learning.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive analysis model consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process was carried out continuously from the beginning of data collection until meaningful findings were obtained regarding the integration of local wisdom in elementary school learning (Miles et al., 2019).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The research findings were obtained through data collection techniques, including observation, interviews, and documentation involving classroom teachers, students, and the school principal. The collected data indicate that the integration of local wisdom in elementary school learning has been implemented through various instructional activities that utilize local culture as a learning resource.

Based on classroom observations, teachers integrated elements of local culture into learning activities by connecting instructional materials with regional traditions, folklore, and social practices developed within the surrounding community. In Indonesian language lessons, for example, teachers used local folktales as reading materials in literacy activities. Students were asked to read the stories and discuss the moral values contained within them.

In addition, observations revealed that teachers also incorporated traditional games into classroom activities. These games were used in group learning activities to promote collaboration and increase student engagement in the learning process. Students appeared more active and enthusiastic when learning activities involved familiar cultural elements from their daily lives.

Interviews with teachers indicated that the integration of local wisdom is carried out as an effort to make learning more contextual and relevant to students' lives. Teachers stated that the use of local cultural elements helps students better understand learning materials because they are already familiar with the cultural context.

Interviews with the school principal further revealed that the school supports the implementation of local wisdom-based learning through various educational activities involving community culture. The school encourages teachers to utilize the surrounding environment as a learning resource and to integrate local cultural values into classroom instruction.

Moreover, interviews with students showed that they felt more interested and motivated when learning activities were associated with local culture. Students reported that they found it easier to understand the material when examples were related to their everyday experiences.

The findings were also supported by documentation data in the form of lesson plans and teaching materials that demonstrate teachers' efforts to incorporate local cultural elements into the learning process. These documents include lesson plans, teaching modules, and records of learning activities involving local cultural content.

**Table 1. Research Findings**

<b>Data Collection Technique</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Observation	Teachers integrated folklore, traditional games, and local traditions into learning activities
Teacher interviews	Local wisdom-based learning helps make instruction more contextual
Student interviews	Students are more interested and better understand the material
Principal interviews	The school supports the integration of local culture in learning
Documentation	Learning plans include elements of local culture

Overall, the findings indicate that the integration of local wisdom has been implemented through various learning activities that utilize local culture as a source of learning. These findings suggest that incorporating local wisdom into elementary school learning can create a more contextual and meaningful learning process for students. By connecting learning materials with students' cultural experiences, students are able to better understand concepts because the content is relevant to their daily lives.

The use of folklore as a learning resource in Indonesian language instruction, for instance, not only enhances students' literacy skills but also serves as a medium for instilling moral values embedded within local culture. Folklore is an important element of oral tradition that contains moral messages and social values that can be utilized as a means of character education (Putri et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the use of traditional games in learning activities contributes to increasing student engagement. Traditional games not only function as entertainment but also as a medium for instilling social values such as cooperation, sportsmanship, and responsibility. Previous studies indicate that traditional games can serve as effective learning media for developing students' social skills and character (Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2022).

The findings also demonstrate that local wisdom-based learning can strengthen students' cultural identity. Integrating local culture into learning helps students recognize and understand the cultural values present in their community. This is particularly important in the context of globalization, which may influence the sustainability of local cultures. Education that incorporates local wisdom plays a role in fostering cultural awareness and nurturing a sense of pride in regional identity (Suryani et al., 2021).

In addition, the local wisdom-based learning approach aligns with the concept of ethnopedagogy, which emphasizes the use of local culture as a learning resource. Ethnopedagogy highlights the importance of integrating cultural values into the educational process so that learning remains grounded in the social and cultural context of society (Parwati et al., 2023).

Learning based on local culture also contributes to students' character education. Values such as cooperation, mutual respect, and responsibility are embedded within cultural practices and can be internalized through culturally based learning activities. Thus, the integration of local culture in learning not only serves as a means of cultural preservation but also as a strategy for character education.

However, the study also reveals several challenges in the implementation of local wisdom-based learning. One of the main challenges is the limited availability of teaching materials that specifically incorporate local cultural values. Most textbooks used in schools are still general in nature, requiring teachers to develop additional materials that align with the local cultural context.

In addition, limited instructional time is another factor affecting the integration of local wisdom in classroom activities. Teachers must adjust learning activities to meet curriculum

demands, which are often dense, making it difficult to consistently connect all materials with local cultural elements.

Despite these challenges, the findings indicate that the integration of local wisdom in elementary school learning has significant potential to enhance the quality of education while strengthening students' cultural identity. Therefore, more systematic efforts are needed to develop local wisdom-based learning models that can be widely implemented within the education system.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the integration of local wisdom in elementary school learning is an effective strategy for creating a learning process that is contextual, meaningful, and relevant to students' lives. The results indicate that local wisdom can be integrated through various instructional activities, such as the use of regional folklore, traditional games, and the introduction of social and cultural values embedded within the community. This integration enables students to better understand learning materials, as the content is closely related to their real-life experiences.

In addition to enhancing students' understanding of local culture, local wisdom-based learning also plays a significant role in strengthening students' cultural identity. Through learning activities that incorporate local culture, students become more familiar with the traditions and cultural values present in their communities. This fosters a sense of pride in their cultural identity and increases awareness of the importance of preserving local culture amidst globalization.

Furthermore, the integration of local wisdom in learning contributes to the development of students' character values. Values such as cooperation, responsibility, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), and mutual respect can be instilled through learning activities that incorporate elements of local culture. Thus, local wisdom-based learning not only serves as a means of cultural preservation but also functions as a strategy for character education.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers actively develop teaching materials that utilize local cultural potential as a learning resource in classroom activities. Schools are also encouraged to support the implementation of local wisdom-based learning through educational policies and the provision of culturally relevant learning resources. In addition, future research is expected to further explore the development of more systematic local wisdom-based learning models and to examine their effectiveness in improving the quality of learning across different educational levels.

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